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D I S C O U R S E

U P O N

R E L I G I O N.



DISCOURSE

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UPON

DISCOURSE

RELIGION

UPON



RELIGION

EDINBURGH

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A  
DISCOURSE  
UPON  
RELIGION.

IN TWO PARTS.

EDINBURGH;

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

**T**HERE are who will think, that a serious discourse upon Religion is but ill adapted to the present taste. Others again will consider it in a different view. And to those who admire that species of piety which touches the heart, it is hoped the following treatise will afford both entertainment and improvement.

THAT the author, who is now dead, did not intend it for the world, appears from the introductory address to his children. For them only he wrote, unambitious of fame, and careless of profit. At an early period of life, being thrown into melancholy reflections by the death of a beloved wife, and afraid lest, by an event of the same nature, his children might be left orphans in the hands of strangers, he thought himself naturally  
a called

## ii ADVERTISEMENT.

called upon to employ the leisure his situation then afforded, in putting on paper his thoughts on some subjects, the consideration of which he reckoned highly interesting to their present and future happiness.

WHETHER his friends have judged well in communicating his peculiar sentiments to the world, the manner of their reception will determine. But they fondly hope, that the spirit of charity, mildness, and humanity, breathing through the whole, joined to that elegant simplicity of language which on every occasion distinguishes the gentleman, will render them acceptable to many. And if in the least degree they can tend to promote the sociable and amiable dispositions so conspicuous in the author, the end they proposed will be fully answered.



ADVERTISEMENT  
TO MY CHILDREN.

**I**N the following papers I propose to lay before you a plan of religion; and to point in it the narrow way mentioned by our Saviour. I shall likewise mark the by-paths which open by degrees into the beaten road that leads to destruction; especially such of them as seem to be most dangerous, and most likely to invite the traveller. In doing this, I shall, with all the exactness I can, and I hope with an upright intention, copy from the practice of Jesus Christ, and from his doctrine, as it is explained by himself, and those who have been sent and directed by him. I shall copy, I say, with all the exactness I can, and with a fixed determination to receive every thing on that authority, and nothing that is contrary to it.

Were these papers to be sent into the world with a declaration of this kind, I doubt not but Lord Shaftesbury's rule of trying things by the test of ridicule would

be applied ; and they who glory in being called *freethinkers*, would tell me, (if they thought it worth their while to tell me any thing), that Reason is the sovereign judge, and its authority alone decisive. But as I write not for the world, I am not exposed to its censure, nor subjected to its rules. I can, without fear of ridicule, endeavour to confine Reason to a less extensive jurisdiction, and venture to acknowledge a higher authority, to which reason itself must submit : I can make use of reason, to shew, that its determinations are not decisive but when it acts within its sphere ; and that there may be cases in which an appeal to its tribunal would argue defect, either of judgement, or of sincerity.

That all things were created by an eternal almighty being, is a truth so clear, and so agreeable to reason, that the free-thinkers (those who believe there is such a being) will have us solely indebted to it for the discovery : and as infinite perfection is always included in the idea which reason gives of this supreme cause, another truth is discovered, no less clear and uncontroverted : “ All his works are perfect,

"fect, every thing in its kind; and what-  
"ever is, was made just what it ought to  
"be, and could not have been better."  
Thus far reason goes without stop; but  
when it advances a little, and will consider  
these works of God separately, or as they  
stand with respect to one another, the per-  
fection it looks for is not to be found;  
and if it was not for the absurdities that  
must follow, the former hypothesis would  
be given up, and the world called an ef-  
fect of chance, rather than the work of an  
intelligent perfect being.

How then shall reason extricate itself  
from this difficulty? There is one way,  
and not another: by acknowledging it is  
not qualified to judge of the works of  
God, or to determine what is, or is not  
perfect.

The same difficulties occur, if we turn  
our thoughts on providence. Reason tells  
us, that "he who made the world, go-  
"verneth it;" yet this very reason is often  
on the point of ascribing all to human  
prudence, or the caprice of fortune; so  
unlike is the present state of things to the  
idea

idea it forms of a system governed by infinite wisdom. But as it does not pretend to limit God in the works of creation, and to tell how many worlds he may make, or different species of beings; how comes it to assume a title of directing his providence, or to fix the methods he will use in managing his creatures? Has he at any time promised to be guided by it, (human reason I mean), and never to act without its approbation? He has given it, it is true, to be a light to man; but has he entered in covenant with it to give him no other? or has he assured us that it will comprehend all his ways, and fathom the depths of infinite wisdom? These are things reason does not assert: so we are again forced to acknowledge its insufficiency, and that "whatever God does" is right, whether we perceive the fitness "of it, or not."

Let us adhere now to this maxim, be the consequence what it will. Let us silence reason, as oft as it will disturb us in applying it to particular cases; and boldly affirm that such a conduct is rational. How happy for us, could we act in this uniform



uniform way ! What a number of doubts and fears would be struck off at once ! what peace of mind, instead of perplexity and anguish !

This absolute submission of the faculty on which we value ourselves most, is the greatest homage we can pay to God ; and as it is followed by a simple undisputing acquiescence, or a sinking ourselves into the arms of the Deity, than which nothing can be more acceptable, or better prepare us for those graces and communications which are and always will be incomprehensible to reason, it is the part of every one to use his utmost endeavours to fix himself in this temper, and to reject every contrary motion. But, alas ! we are seldom able to act the part that is proper for us ; and perhaps as little on these occasions as any. Reason, under the influence of pride, every now and then is buzzing in our ears, “ Such and such ought to be the way of wisdom : this or that serves no end, and therefore cannot be from God : another thing is inconsistent with justice, or with mercy. Here omnipotence is taken away, there too  
“ little



“ little is given to the creature. You cannot be sure of the truth but when you receive it from my mouth ; I am the light of the mind ; and when it is not directed by me, it falls into superstition or enthusiasm.”

Thus we are again disconcerted ; doubts arise, our simplicity dwindles into nothing, and we enter anew into dispute with God. For such is the weakness of human nature, that though we be sensible these suggestions ought to be neglected, we find ourselves uneasy if the grounds of them are not removed ; and by degrees we grow fearful and anxious, distrustful of God, and unable to believe a fitness where we do not perceive it. If by strength of genius, or some other way, we are not quickly recovered from this disease of the mind, it is ten to one but it settles in scepticism or infidelity ; an infidelity so much the more dangerous, that it seems to be the effect of profound reasoning, and solidity of judgement, though in reality it proceeds from quite contrary causes.

It is to prevent your falling into this misfortune, or to help you out of it, that I have taken a resolution to give you my thoughts on some things which have occasioned to myself perplexity of the most uneasy kind. I am far from expecting to make discoveries, or to search deeper than others have done; but perhaps you will read with greater attention than is commonly bestowed on books that treat of these subjects: and as I have had more time to think of them than you may have, or incline to take, it is possible I may set them in a clearer light than they would otherwise appear in to you. Another thing too encourages me to this attempt.

I have observed, that some, whose tempers naturally incline them to the humble peaceful acquiescence mentioned already, take a wrong bias from false notions of the Deity, arising for the most part from a misrepresentation of the ends of creation and providence, or of the nature of God and of the creatures. Now, it does not seem unreasonable to believe, that a clear distinct view of the divine conduct, so far as it is comprehensible to men,  
b might

might in some measure prevent the mistakes and prejudices which people of this temper are more exposed to than others, and less able to shake off: and, I think, the task is not so very hard, but that I may hope to perform it in such a way as will be useful to you, since it may fall into your hands before you have taken impressions from books or company.

I shall begin with what I purpose to write in that view, which shall be so placed as to make one part of this discourse; being resolved, for preventing the confusion that arises when things are thrown together without order, to divide it into parts and sections. In the second part I shall endeavour to set religion in a true light with regard to practice; taking notice, as they fall in my way, of some dangerous and not uncommon opinions: dangerous, I say, as being not only false in themselves, but tending to give false ideas of perfection and happiness, and of the method of attaining them.

C O N -

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FIRST PART.

SECTION I.

1. *Of the nature of intelligent beings, particularly of man.*
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3. *Some reflections upon the nature of sin, and the origin of evil.*

I. **M**AN, like the angels, is so made as to find his happiness in the enjoyment of God. There is something in him that cannot be otherwise satisfied; something that is appropriated for God,  
A and,



and, if he does not fill it, must for ever remain empty. For as in God the desire of his Eternal Word or Light is the very centre, and, if I may speak so, the first principle in the Deity; so likewise in man, whom God created in his own image, a desire of the Divine Light or Word is the centre and first principle of his nature.

It is absolutely impossible that God, should ever cease to desire, or desiring, not find, his Word, which is the living, bright, and clear idea or knowledge of himself: for the desire is the eternal begetting of this well-beloved Son, God eternal, equal, and one with the Father. And the love, joy, peace, and acquiescence, which necessarily and eternally arise from the contemplation and enjoyment of him, is God the Holy Ghost, eternal, equal, and one with the Father and the Son. Thus, in the ever-blessed and glorious Trinity, these three are one, and indivisible: and thus, by eternally desiring, knowing, and loving himself, with an infinite delight, joy, and acquiescence \*, God is eternally sufficient to and infinitely

\* What is said here of the Trinity, is not with any view of bringing that mystery to a level with human understanding. See the first three paragraphs of sect. iv. 2.

happy in himself. But it is not so with man: and this is one of the essential differences that must for ever remain betwixt the creature and the creator.

Though man is of divine nature, (Be not surpris'd with the expression: nothing less can desire and receive God in an intelligent manner; and it seems to be intimated to us by Moses, when, giving account of the creation, he says, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him \*." I say, then,

\* Without a divine principle it were impossible for us to have any real direct perceptions of God, in this life, or the next; or any knowledge of him, but by analogy with what we feel in ourselves: we should not only be blind with respect to God and divine things, but even without eyes; and should be for ever incapable to receive one spark of divine light, so to receive it as to be affected by it, or to know that it had been darted into our souls. And when the corruption brought upon us by sin should be done away, and we admitted to that state in which we hope for perfect happiness by a real enjoyment of God, we should have nothing presented to us but a picture of him drawn from ourselves, and by our own hand; more like perhaps than what we have here, but still a picture; such a picture as can have no direct resemblance, or any resemblance but by analogy; and that happiness which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive," must dwindle into the ideal enjoyment of an image of our own framing.

then, though man is of divine nature), and consequently desires God infinitely, he cannot by any act of his own raise in himself the Divine Light or Word. It

These are the consequences of denying that there is something divine in man, or that the ground of his nature is something which agrees in kind with the nature of God; something which desires him infinitely, and is capable to receive, possess, and enjoy him in a direct, real, and divine manner. And indeed it is not possible, otherwise than by admitting a capacity for such real direct knowledge, perception, and enjoyment of God, as will infer what is here contended for; I say, it is not possible otherwise to assign or conceive any tolerable reason why it should be said of man alone, that he was created in the image of God. Have not the beasts their instinct for our reason? have they not passions, affections, sensations, corresponding to ours, and resembling them at least by analogy? And if there be nothing in us that resembles God by a real direct resemblance, not analogical, but in kind, do not they resemble him as we do? and are they not as truly created in his image, though by a less perfect analogy? Yea, they must be as really images of God as the most exalted seraphim, if it be true that no creature can resemble him but by analogy. And if that be not true, why should it be denied, or rather why should it be doubted, that man has a resemblance to God, the same in kind with that of the angels; such a resemblance as, not being common to him with the beasts, can alone intitle him to be called *the image of God* in distinction from them?

Against this it will surely be no argument with those who believe a fall, and that a load of corruption is brought upon human nature by sin, that now we have

**SECT. I. I. UPON RELIGION.**

is absolutely inconceivable, and of all impossibilities the most impossible, that God should be the work of a creature, or that it should be able to produce him in itself by its own power. All it can do is, by a full and free act of the will, to turn its divine faculties towards God; (by these I mean the faculties by which it is capable to receive, love, and acquiesce in the Divine Light). If it does this, God infallibly makes his light to spring up in it: he finds it now a proper temple for his Eternal Word; and having created it for this very end, that he might see, love, and enjoy himself in it, he cannot frustrate his

no knowledge of God as he is in himself, or any distinct sensation of his acting in and upon the spirit of man. They will only conclude from hence, that this divine principle, which is the true image of God, and consequently alone capable of a real direct communication with him, is somehow or other rendered unfit for that purpose; or that God in his infinite wisdom sees it more proper, and more conducive to our purification, so to cover himself as with a veil, that both his nature and operations shall be hid from us, except in so far as they may be known by revelation, together with that inferior sort of knowledge which we can strike out for ourselves by analogy: nor will they imagine that human knowledge can, with respect to things divine, ever be carried beyond those limits, but by faithfully corresponding with the secret and hidden operations of God.

OWN



own design, or contradict himself. And seeing God loves and acquiesces in his Word where-ever it is, the creature being thus filled with it, or transformed into it, becomes to God an object of love and delight; and, for the sake of his beloved Son, whose temple it now is, he opens all his treasures, and displays his glory in it; yea he takes it into him, and communicates the ineffable joys that arise from the commerce of the holy and incomprehensible Trinity with itself. This is the end to which God has destined his creatures! this is the immutable and universal decree in which Adam and all his posterity are included! A decree full of love, full of goodness, and worthy of God.

If now it had pleased God to carry his idea of the creature no farther than that it should have communication with himself only, nothing could have been wanting to it; and the idea had been complete, beautiful, and perfect. We know that God is sufficient to himself, and infinitely happy in his eternity, independent of all other beings whatsoever; it will surely then be impossible to doubt of his being sufficient, and an inexhaustible fund of happiness, to



a creature: and to be capable to receive, love, and enjoy God, is not that to be complete? Again, what greater beauty and perfection than to be filled with him, or greater happiness than to be happy as he is happy? Nothing is more easily conceived than this idea of a creature considered abstractly with relation only to God: it is indeed the only simple and necessary idea of an intelligent creature; all other ideas may be called accessory or accidental; for though they may really belong to it, it might have existed without them. This, in speaking of man, is called the *spirit*, and sometimes the *centre*, or *fund*, of the soul\*.

But

\* It is easy to conceive a being conscious of its own existence, yet cut off from all intercourse with the material creation, or possibility of forming true ideas concerning it. One born blind has not that communication with the creatures; nor those ideas, which come by seeing; and if the same person is deprived of another of the senses, (hearing for instance), he will also be deprived of the communication and ideas which come by it. Now, if one may be deprived of two of the senses, why not of three? why not of all? It is but supposing that part of the body which we call the *sensory*, and which is reckoned to be, in this life, the only mean of communication, so out of order as to take no impressions. The thing surely is conceivable enough: and if so, the consequence

But God did not will to stop here. He would have his creatures not only to participate of the essential and supreme happiness

quence cannot be denied, *viz.* the whole material creation, and all those works of God whose ideas and communications cannot be conveyed another way, will be as nothing to him; his immaterial part being nevertheless complete, and endued with all the sensibilities, powers, and faculties which belong to it. He may be capable of love, anger, hatred, &c. He may be capable to will; reason, remember, reflect; and if he does not feel those sensations in the common way, nor exercise these faculties, it is because the door of communication is shut, and consequently no ideas taken in.

In the same manner, it will be as easy to conceive him existing in the world of spirits, deprived of one or all of those methods or means of communication which belong to that state: and thus cut off from all intercourse with the works of God, he will exist as if there was not a creature but himself: and as we consider the bodily senses (or rather the organs and canals by which sensations and ideas are conveyed to the soul here; I say, as we consider these) as belonging to the body, and with it making as it were a complete system different from the immaterial part; such a system as might never have been joined to it (as we believe it may be dropped) without altering its nature, or putting an end to its existence; so likewise the soul may be considered as another system, in which are senses, sensibilities, powers, and faculties, adapted to the intellectual immaterial world or creation, but so differing from the fund or centre, that, if such had been the will of God, he might have existed a pure spirit, endued only with senses, sensibilities, powers, and faculties, adapted to the creator, such as could not be

piness he enjoys in himself, but likewise to have an accessory happiness resembling that which he condescends to receive from them.

be touched, or any way whatsoever affected by the creatures, no more than an unembodied spirit can be touched or affected by material fire.

Sure the communications of an infinite being may so eminently transcend, so really differ from, those of a finite nature, as to require sensibilities, powers, and faculties, very much transcending, and essentially differing from, those proportioned to other objects; and the one sort may be as useless and unfit with respect to the other, as bodily eyes for giving an idea of angelic beauty. Nay, this notion I think not only conceivable, but even so rational, that, without admitting it, it will be as hard to conceive any intimate, real, immediate communication with God, as that unembodied spirits should be visible to us with our bodily eyes. Nor will it infer a duplicity in man. We acknowledge that he is made up of body and soul, and that these two are of different natures; yet never suppose the unity so broke as to make of him two distinct beings. Why then may not this unity subsist tho' we join a third, and say, He is made up of body, soul, and spirit? in which we shall but follow St Paul, who, in his epistle to the Thessalonians, (1st ep. v. 23.), praying that the God of peace might sanctify them wholly, adds, as it were to explain the former part of the verse, or rather the word *wholly*, "And I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Whosoever is not willing to reject the apostle's authority, or to fancy that he has put down words without a meaning, will see from this single passage, that there is sufficient ground to believe a threefold nature in man.

them. He therefore added to this divine principle; divine both with respect to its nature and object: he added, I say, or rather built upon it, senses, faculties, and powers of an inferior nature, by which the creatures were made capable to act upon one another, and mutually to communicate what they should receive from God; and by considering these as distinct from the spirit, and making, as it were, a particular system by themselves, you will have an idea of that part in man which is properly called the *soul*, and is the seat of all the sensibilities, faculties, and powers, by which we are capable to receive impressions from the creatures, animate and inanimate, or to act upon them, whether by the bodily senses, and powers arising from an union with matter, or by ways yet unknown to us.

It is then by the soul we have communication with the creatures, and by the spirit with God; but in different ways. The creatures act upon one another from

ther passages point the same way; and the outward and inner man are often mentioned. To say that by the outward man is meant the body, would be a very unsatisfactory explanation,

without;



without ; but the operations of God are from the centre, like “ a fountain of water springing up unto eternal life,” or a central heat, which diffuses peace and joy through the whole man. And howsoever in this life the body may hinder us from having intercourse with created beings who live in another element, nothing but our own wills can separate us from God. It is not without us we are to look for him : “ In him,” indeed, “ we live, move, “ and have our being ;” but it is in the spirit, which he has created for himself, that “ he takes delight to be with the “ children of men.”

This way of distinguishing betwixt the soul and spirit, is far from being without foundation. The best writers often mention it. St Paul speaks of body, soul, and spirit ; some of the Heathen philosophers make the same division ; and the poets on every occasion. Homer, to mention no more, does it (Od. b. 11.) in a way not to be overlooked. Ulysses meets and converses with the shade or soul of Hercules in the regions of the dead, while his spirit or divine part is with the gods. Here we see plainly the opinion of the ancients



concerning the nature of man; by one part he has communication with the Deity, by another with the creatures: and these parts are said to be in different mansions, to shew they are appropriated each to its own end. Was it Reason that led to this discovery? I believe not; and to say it was, would, in the eye of some, be doing it no honour. Yet a firm foundation the opinion must have had, or it could not have been so universally received, by, not the vulgar only, but philosophers and the learned; to whose endeavours to reconcile it with their philosophy, perhaps, we owe a good deal of the confusion and darkness in which it has come down to us \*.

### Reason

\* From Homer's words in this passage, and even from the general notion of the ancients concerning the state of the dead, one must observe it was their opinion, that the supreme part or inner man may be united to God, (by a peaceful acquiescence in the divine will); while the outward is in a suffering state; which would not ill represent a purification after death, that might easily be stripped of the false and gross ideas it has been loaded with by poets, and in later times by men of another character. But the following observation will more properly have a place here. It is a part of the note on ver. 160. b. 21. of Mr Pope's translation of the *Odyssey*.—"The next line is very remarkable, for the distinction it makes  
" between

Reason is commonly looked on as the chief characteristic by which man is differentiated from the beasts; and when we would form a nobler idea of a creature than that it is rational, we often lose ourselves. Yet to affirm that there can be nothing above reason, were much the same as if a blind man should deny the reality of light and colours. We are even sensible, that without something higher the angels would not be those perfect creatures we suppose them to be; and our Saviour tells us we shall be like them. I forget not that "man is made a little lower than the angels;" but that ought to be understood, not of his nature, but of the state he was placed in at the creation; which, though paradisiacal, was but a state of trial, from whence, after being confirmed in good, he

is between *super* and *lux*, soul and spirit. The reader may turn to the note on lib. 23. ver. 92. 122. of the *Iliad*, and that on lib. 2. ver. 743. of the *Odysey*, where an account is given of the notion of the ancients concerning this division. I shall only here add a passage in St Paul to the Hebrews, which did not then occur to me, that remarkably falls in with it: *The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit.* Heb. iv. 12.

was

was to have been translated to that state of perfect happiness which the angels do enjoy, and the blessed are to enjoy after the resurrection, without needing new powers or faculties to be added, being made complete at first, and "in the image of God\*." Nor could the fall make any change in this respect: he was created eternal as to his existence; and all that belonged to his nature, or was a part of it, was given him to be his eternally.

It is by slow degrees we come to the knowledge of ourselves, and only as we have opportunities of using our faculties, and of awakening our passions. A man

\* Heb. ii. 6. 7. "What is man that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that thou regardest him? Thou madest him a little lower than [or, as it is on the margin of our Bibles, a little while inferior to] the angels. Thou crownedst him with glory and honour." This passage is quoted from Psal. viii. where the Psalmist speaks of man in general; nor does St Paul so apply it to Jesus Christ, as if it was to be understood of him only. A gradation of beings is a fancy agreeable perhaps to mathematical geniuses; but what gradation betwixt finite and infinite, the creature and the creator? or betwixt intelligent beings capable to love and enjoy God; let it be in the lowest manner, and the brute creation? and what link of this chain of nature will be long enough to reach from the animal to the vegetable life?

with

with sound eyes, who had been always kept in a dark place, would understand just as little of the sense of seeing as one born blind. It is exactly the same with all the other senses. And if one should pretend to give a definition of love, or joy, or any of the passions he himself had never felt, and assured us he was not to borrow, we would expect nothing better than such ideas as the blind man had of scarlet when he compared it to the sound of a trumpet. Again, if we suppose the soul locked in the body as in a dark prison, without ideas, and no possibility of receiving any, I doubt it would find so little to reason upon, that it would be long enough of discovering itself to be rational.

This, now, ought to convince, not only that there may be something in man distinct from the soul, and of a superior nature, but even that in the soul itself there may be senses, faculties, and powers, with which we are unacquainted. Yea, it must be so; and whosoever would assert the contrary, ought first to deny that there are other ways of receiving ideas, or ideas of a different nature from what we have; unless they will say, that when we are introduced



duced into a new system, new sets of faculties and senses are given. But this will by no means agree with the account we have of our origin. A creature made in the image of God, cannot upon every change of state need such additions as would come near to a new creation. Such imperfect work were unworthy of God. It is better to conclude, that our being so much cut off from that world of which we are to be inhabitants, does not proceed from the want of proper senses for receiving impressions from it, and for conveying their ideas; but these senses are wrapt up in the body, and its organs, even the most subtile, can only be affected by material things of their own nature.

There are diseases in which the power of opening the eyes is lost; when that happens, the sense of seeing is stopped while the disease continues, though the eye itself be found and entire. It is to such a cause I would impute our not having the use of those senses, which, as they stand now, may, for distinction's sake, be called *inward*; and not to the want of the senses themselves, or of objects to strike upon them. I believe, the body is the wall



wall of partition by which we are separated from other beings; and when that is broke down, we shall probably find we have been divided more by a principle, than distance of place.

I fear the word *principle* may be thought to stand here without a meaning; but it is sometimes not very easy to find words to express our ideas, little and imperfect as they are; nor am I sure but their being so may be one, though not the only cause of the difficulty. Perhaps you will understand it better, if you consider the vision St Stephen had at his martyrdom. He saw the heavens open, and "the Son of Man" standing at the right hand of God. It would be very gross to suppose the atmosphere was rent asunder, and the heavens (as if beyond it) laid open to his bodily eyes; but with the inward senses all is easy: by uncovering them (which, though above human power, is but a small effect of the power of God) the glories of the other world would become manifest \*, in

\* St Paul was taken into the third heaven, and heard things unutterable; whether in the body, or out of the body, he knew not.

the same manner as after his separation from the body.

But as to these extraordinary things, every one may satisfy himself in his own way. I shall even acknowledge, that to be informed of the inward senses which belong to the soul, is of little, perhaps of no importance. The case, however, seems to be very different with regard to the spirit. Were the distinction betwixt it and the soul more generally attended to, dry philosophical notions in religion would not so much prevail: nor would they who can despise sensual pleasures, set their hearts upon intellectual ones proceeding wholly from the understanding, or upon such as may arise from a consciousness of virtue; as if these were the chief end of man. And when one sits down contented with the happiness they give, it is just as if a person having a gangrene, and finding some ease by laudanum, should obstinately refuse to suffer the operation of the surgeon. By repeating, and increasing the doze, his ease might continue until the whole mass of blood was corrupted; but, how much soever he might applaud himself in his own skill, every by-stander  
who

who understood the nature of the disease, would see that death must be the consequence of such a management \*.

That the fall has made a great and dismal change in man, is very certain ; but as some are not enough sensible of this, others carry it too far. To consider him as a ruin of a great magnificent building, gives a tolerable idea of his present state, if it be remembered, that the materials, even the most valuable, are in the ruin, (though they do not appear, being covered with dust and rubbish) ; and that the building is to be repaired, by putting them again in their first order. Some judgement may likewise be made of the nature of the materials, if one has the plan, and is informed of the uses to which the building is destined. This seems to be our case. The plan is, I may say, laid before us by St Paul in the division mentioned already : and that we are made to enjoy God, and to have fellowship with the holy angels, is told us by our Saviour, and often repeated by those who have wrote under the direction of the Holy Spirit. These dif-

\* See the fourth and fifth paragraphs of sect. i. 1. part second.

coveries stand upon too good authority to be doubted of ; and whatever their being true makes necessary to be in man, may be affirmed of him. It is in this way we ought to judge of his nature, and not from the ruinous condition in which it now lies. That indeed proves the necessity of a reparation, but it proves no more.

II. HAVING given you a general view of the nature of intelligent beings, (drawn from what God has been pleased to reveal of his design in willing their existence, which was, that all, none excepted, should be happy in the enjoyment of him, by the same kind of happiness he has in himself, and receive also an accessory happiness from one another) ; in order to complete the idea of man, something might be added concerning the body, by which new scenes are opened, and a whole system of inferior creatures subjected to his will. But seeing what goes before is applicable to angels as well as to men, and that I intend to make a few observations upon the way in which sin and disorder entered, I will leave what is to be said of the material creation, till I come  
to

to speak particularly of the fall of man. For though it were certain (as some believe, and not without ground) that the angels have material vehicles, we would still be so much in the dark as to the nature and uses of them, that the most ingenious inquirers would find no surer foundation for their discoveries than conjecture; and in things of that kind, conjectures are often as well let one. Let us rather apply our thoughts to what more nearly concerns us. The love of God ought to be our principal aim, and that knowledge only is profitable that leads to it.

Now, because it is impossible to love any being that is not good, and believed to be so; it comes to be not only profitable, but necessary, to know as much of God, and of his conduct, as to give us right sentiments of his goodness. He might be admired or feared for his other attributes, but would never be loved if he was not good. You will easily observe, it is the origin of evil I have in view. Nothing is more difficult to most people than to satisfy themselves about it, so as to reconcile infinite goodness with omnipotence; and it is too true, that  
it



it is a rock upon which many have miserably split. Absolute despair, or an ill-grounded assurance, are often the melancholy consequences of a mistake in this matter: and indeed, if the danger was less, I should hardly prevail with myself to dip into what is generally accounted one of the knottiest points in theology; which in a manner has divided the world into two parties, and these again into many lesser ones. But the heat with which disputes are sometimes carried on, is not always a proof that the truth is not to be discovered: on the contrary, it often happens, that things clear enough in themselves, are made obscure by the laborious way in which people go about to explain them.

I have said, in speaking of the creation of intelligent beings, that God destined his creatures to be happy; and that all were included in this decree. "How comes it, then, all are not happy? Is God unable to execute his will? or has any new consideration moved him to change his purpose?"

Neither of these. In him to will and to do is the same; and his decrees are unchangeable as his nature. But seeing  
happiness

happiness consists in the enjoyment of God, or, in other words, in having the divine faculties filled with his light; if the creature has a power of turning itself away from God, or of refusing access to the light, in case it does so, it is plain it cannot be filled with the light, or it cannot be happy. Now, in intelligent creatures no-happiness is, and must be, misery: for, not having light in themselves, all becomes dark and confused; the divine faculties are empty, the desire restless and unsatisfied, and the whole creature full of rage, anguish, and despair. This is the true idea of evil; (if we consider it as any thing positive or real inflicted by God, by way of punishment, our notions will be quite wrong); and that the creature may thus bring it upon itself needs no proof, since it has actually done it.

“ If evil is contrary to the will of God,  
“ and yet happens because the creature  
“ wills it, is not that to make the creature  
“ more mighty than God?”

Evil is contrary to the will of God, but it is not contrary to his will that the creature use the liberty which he has given it. People must have strange notions of omnipotence,

nipotence, if they fancy it consists in willing and not-willing; in willing a creature to be free, and not to be free. Nothing would more shew the want of omnipotence than to will in this manner: it were a willing without effect.

“Is it not a willing without effect, when  
“God wills that all the creatures should  
“be happy, and nevertheless many of  
“them are miserable?”

It ought to be considered, that misery is inseparable from evil. Evil is the want of reality and good; misery is the want of the happiness that comes from the possession of what is real and good; the one necessarily follows the other, and both are unavoidable consequences of sin; which itself is an act of the liberty, or will, by which the creature withdraws from God, and refuses to admit the Divine Light. Now, how much soever God willed the happiness of his creatures, he could not will them to be happy in a state in which it is absolutely impossible to be so. He could not will darkness to be the same with light, faculties to be full when they are really empty, or the desire to be satisfied when it does not possess its object. If God had  
created

created beings with a design to make them happy by filling them with himself, and it should be found their faculties were incapable to receive him, or received him without sensations of joy and delight, this most certainly were willing in vain: and if God designed to create beings endued with liberty, and it should be found they were not free; would not this likewise be willing in vain?

“ Did not God foresee or know that  
 “ some of the creatures would make a bad  
 “ use of their liberty? and if so, was not  
 “ the giving it a consenting, at least, to  
 “ sin, and to all its consequences \*?”

• “ It is impossible for God to foresee such things as  
 “ depend upon the determinations of free agents; be-  
 “ cause that which never happened, does not exist, and  
 “ consequently cannot be known: for nothing having  
 “ no properties, cannot be perceived. God cannot read  
 “ in a will which is not in being, nor see in the soul a  
 “ thing which does not exist in her: for till she has ta-  
 “ ken her determination, the action which she is deter-  
 “ mined upon is not in her.

“ The soul is the author of her own determination:  
 “ but there are some occasions in which she is so irreso-  
 “ lute, that she knows not which way to determine.  
 “ Sometimes she does it, merely to make use of her li-  
 “ berty; so that God cannot see this determination be-  
 “ forehand, neither in the action of the soul, nor in the  
 “ action of the objects upon her.” *Montesquieu, Persian*  
*Letters, let. 56.*

D

When



When God formed the idea of a free intelligent creature, he saw, no doubt, that the management of itself would be altogether in its own hands; that in giving it liberty, he gave it an absolute power over its conduct, subjected to no rule whatsoever but its own will. He saw likewise, that however perfect he was to make it, it would not be sufficient to itself; that it could not be happy but by being filled with his Eternal Light; and that, by virtue of its liberty, it might refuse to admit it. Thus, God foresaw sin as a possible thing; that is, he foresaw it as it could be foreseen. He foresaw that the creatures might make a bad use of their liberty; but he did not, could not, foresee that they would do it. God is not at odds with himself: if by his power he has made creatures free, he cannot will to make them otherwise by his prescience; and the conduct of free agents is not knowable with certainty, until they have determined themselves. Prescience there is in God; scripture and reason affirm it; but we may likewise discover from both, that it does not clash with liberty or free-will: and they who think otherwise, will, by tracing the  
the



the consequences, find themselves obliged to admit a fatalism in God as well as in the creatures\*.

“A prescience even of this kind will  
“infer on the part of God a consent to

“Foreknowledge and decrees are only assigned to

“God to give us a notion of the steadiness and certainty

“of the divine actions; and because we are certain that

“he cannot be surpris'd by any event, nor be at any loss

“what he is to do when it happens: and if so, for us

“to conclude, that what is represented by them is in-

“consistent with the contingency of events or free-will,

“because the things representing (I mean our fore-know-

“ledge and decrees) are so, is the same absurdity, as it

“is to conclude, that China is no bigger than a sheet of

“paper, because the map that represents it is contained

“in that compass. — Now a map is only paper and ink,

“diversified with several strokes and lines, which in

“themselves have very little likeness to earth, moun-

“tains, valleys, lakes, and rivers. Yet none can deny

“but by proportion and analogy they are very in-

“structive; and if any should imagine that those coun-

“tries are really paper, because the maps that represent

“them are made of it, and should seriously draw conclu-

“sions from that supposition, he would expose his under-

“standing, and make himself ridiculous: and yet such as

“argue from the faint resemblances that either scrip-

“ture or reason give of the divine attributes and ope-

“rations, and proceed in their reasonings as if these

“must in all respects answer one another, fall into the

“same absurdities that those would be guilty of, who

“should think countries must be of paper, because the

“maps that represent them are so.” *Archbishop King's*

*Sermon, Romans-viii. 29. 30.*

“the committing of sin; since he might  
“have prevented even the possibility of it,  
“by making the creatures not free. And  
“would it not have been better for them  
“to be thus secured from the danger of  
“misery?”

If by consent, a consent of pleasure or satisfaction be understood, it is absolutely false that God ever consents to sin in that way; but he consents that the creatures act according to their natures, or that liberty be free. If God had willed to continue in his eternity, without making any creatures at all, the possibility of sin had been effectually prevented; or had he willed to direct the resolutions of his creatures, (for he is limited only by himself), he could have foreseen and foreknown all that was to happen; he could by his decrees have fixed their future determinations, and of things possible brought to pass what he pleased: but if he has chosen not to do this; if he has chosen to have creatures “made in his  
“image,” whose determinations (like his) spring from themselves; will any one dare to say it had been better otherwise? and who that reflects upon the surprising  
method

method God has taken to effectuate man's recovery, can doubt that he took all possible care to prevent his fall?

"But if God willed the happiness of all his creatures, why did he not secure it to them, by giving a power to raise in themselves such a light as they could acquiesce in?"

Why did he not make them independent of why not God? for nothing less can be sufficient to itself.

Against this way of accounting for the possibility of evil, no rational objection can be made, if the creatures are endued with liberty; but that is denied: and indeed it is not a new thing for people to argue themselves even out of their senses. With this view very subtle systems of spiritual anatomy have been framed by some late moralists, and the mind dissected with much philosophic skill. But there is a proof allowed to be decisive: it is taken from the absurdity of the contrary opinion, when of two contradictory opinions one must be true. Let us try it here.

There is liberty, or there is not: we will suppose the last. We cannot suppose too that there is no evil. Now where shall we look

look for the cause of it? Not in the creature; for its acts are not its own. The cause of evil is sin: and sin—is it not a resisting the will of God? But how can a creature resist the will of God, all whose acts, thoughts, and motions, are determined by him? If he wills it to do a thing, it does it; if he wills it not to do it, it does it not; if he wills it to do nothing, it does nothing. What follows? Very plainly, I think, that there is no resistance, and consequently no sin. And the next consequence will be, that there is no evil, unless we can find another cause for it.

Perhaps you will think, (for some do think so), that sin might be defined as well, if not better, by saying, “The ideas  
“ of justice, truth, goodness, and right-  
“ teousness, are eternal and immutable;  
“ and whatever contradicts them is sin:  
“ when therefore the creature does so by  
“ any of its thoughts or actions, it com-  
“ mits sin.”

But how does it so? Only because it cannot do otherwise. And is not that act of God, that will by which he determines the creature to contradict these eternal and immutable ideas, is not it a contradiction  
of

of them? By this means indeed (supposing the present definition to be a right one) we have found sin. But where have we found it? Not in the creature, but in God.

Nor will the absurdity be taken away, or even lessened, by saying, with modern Fatalists, that the will is always determined by motives, and never without one; that a train of motives is so laid as to determine it on all occasions invincibly, and therefore necessarily; that there can be no failure in the execution of this project, (surely a project it may be called), since he who formed the will has also laid the motives; that every act, every movement of such a being, will be as certain, as much foreknown, as the revolutions of planets: yet all the consequences with regard to happiness or misery, will be its own work, these acts and movements being the determinations of its own will. But is not all this machinery the work of God? and if it lead beings to misery, is not that misery the end he had in view when he formed their wills, and laid the motives?

Others take a shorter way. They say, "God being under no obligations to his creatures, might, without injustice, communicate



“communicate himself to such of them as  
“he pleased, and pass by the rest.” That  
is, he might create beings of such a nature  
as to be miserable if he does not fill them,  
and then leave them to themselves; not  
for any fault of theirs, but that there may  
be “vessels of wrath,” as well as of love.  
One needs but write down some opinions  
to confute them.

Whatever be the cause that people fall  
into these extravagancies, and even persist  
in them, the difficulties I have mentioned  
concerning the omnipotence and prescience  
of God, is the pretence. The all of God,  
and the nothingness of the creature, are  
undoubted truths when understood right;  
and the specious appearance of maintain-  
ing them, has drawn many well-meaning  
persons into these pernicious errors. There  
are others to whom the yoke of Jesus  
Christ, though easy in itself, appears an  
intolerable burden; yet they are unwilling  
to give up all hopes of happiness: these,  
by having recourse to the decrees of God,  
fancy the care of their salvation taken off  
their hands; and self-love being generally  
strong enough to make every one think  
himself lovely, they can easily believe that  
they

they themselves are in the number of the elect. But, among the first sort, there have been melancholy instances on the other side, when the dismal prospect of a fancied reprobation fills the mind with horror and despair. Nor is it easy to tell which of the extremes is the most dangerous; but to have right notions of the love God bears to all his creatures, and his aversion from sin, is a sure way to guard against both. And it is indeed surprising, how people can at any rate prevail with themselves to believe that God has decreed all the malice, rage, and misery of devils and damned souls, and created a certain number of beings for no other end, but that he might have objects upon whom to exercise eternally the rigours of his wrath. These are things too horrid and impious to be dwelt upon.

III. I HAVE now explained the possibility of evil, I hope, in such a way as is consistent with omnipotence, as well as infinite goodness. Not that I fancy all the cavils answered of those who, for reasons known to themselves, have taken the other side of the question, and industriously perplexed

plexed the truth with all the intricacies human reason has been able to invent \*. The task would be too large, but were I equal to it, I would leave it to those who write for the world ; it is enough for me if you are kept free of prejudices. In that view I go on to consider more particularly the manner in which sin was committed, and evil, of a possible, made a real thing ; real in this sense, that the creature having made a bad use of its liberty, found itself really involved in all the consequences of such a conduct.

In entering upon this subject, I am aware of the difficulty there is to give a tolerable account of an event so extraordinary. That creatures, happy in the enjoyment of God, under the continual in-

\* This is not the only case in which men have bewildered themselves with quirks and subtilties. Spirit is argued out of existence by one set of philosophers, matter by another ; and both fancy, or pretend to fancy, their proofs equal to mathematical demonstrations. A new set may arise, who will deny there is any thing at all. The proofs demonstrated by the two former being joined into one argument, will warrant this conclusion. Indeed philosophic absurdities are so common, that every one who reads must have observed many, when favourite systems are to be established. But every one feels that he exists ; and does not every one feel that he is free ?

fluences

fluences of his Spirit, inwardly filled with his Light, and surrounded with the manifestations of his glory, should by their own will withdraw themselves from infinite good; that creatures innocent and perfect, should forget their creator, neglect the endearing invitations of his love, and the charms of infinite beauty; yea, should rebel against the author of their being, and of their happiness, are things almost inconceivable. I see it with pleasure, and admire the infinite goodness of God in providing for the happiness of his creatures in so secure a way, that we would infallibly conclude his counsels could not be defeated, nor one single creature lost, if experience and revelation did not confirm the contrary. Let us not then expect reasons here; it is in vain to look for them. Yet some cause there must have been, something that had the appearance of good: for we cannot imagine that creatures in this state would wilfully throw away their happiness, merely to disappoint the gracious designs of God.

It has been already observed, that evil is the consequence of sin, and sin a resistance of the will of God. Now there are

two kinds of resistance, the one direct, the other indirect; the direct, when the creature does an action which is contrary to the will of God, knowing it to be so; the indirect, when it does an action which is contrary to the will of God, but not knowing it to be so, until the consequences have discovered it. The first can come only from a will exceedingly depraved, and, if without temptation, diabolical: but the second may be occasioned by want of attention; and how perfect soever the angels were created, it is not impossible but they might fall into a sin of this kind; which indeed, if it goes no farther, I would chuse to call a weakness; for properly there is no resistance in an intelligent being, but when it knows it is resisting. Call it, however, sin, or weakness, or any thing else, (it is no matter for words, if the meaning is understood); but I think it not only possible, but probable, that many even of the good angels, who have kept their first stations, might, in the beginning of their existence, fall into it. I say, in the beginning of their existence; for after a thorough experience of their own natures, and of the infinite perfections



tions of God, there is reason to believe, no object whatsoever can take their attention off him. The time then which precedes this confirmation, is a state of trial, through which, perhaps, all creatures must pass, because they are creatures. But how easy a trial! how little dangerous! All was perfect and good: every creature was a lively and beautiful representation of its divine original, and tended to communicate to others the sentiments of love and adoration towards God with which itself was filled. It was thus they stood with respect to one another: and if next we consider them in themselves, and with respect to God, nothing can be more admirable.

You may call to mind what has been said of the nature of intelligent beings, and consider them now as actually existing, and in possession of that happiness for which they were created; having faculties of an infinite extent, and filled with infinite good; no irregular passions, no desire unsatisfied; no darkness or confusion, but all shining, bright, and glorious, with the glory of the Son of God. In our present dark state we have not ideas

deas whereby to form an image of so much beauty and perfection ; yet with those we have, the representation grows so magnificent, so exceeding great, that we are ready to say within ourselves, *Creatures so exalted cannot fall!* Let us now confine our thoughts to one particular being, and try if we can discover any cause of distraction, any thing that might possibly take its attention off from God.

A consciousness of its own state is necessarily included in the idea of an intelligent being. Thus, if it is beautiful, perfect, and happy, it sees, knows, and feels that it is so ; it looks into itself with complacency ; and, if one may speak so, lays all its beauties open, that it may gaze upon them. It sees indeed these beauties are not properly its own ; and that the light which shines in it, is God the Son, the bright and living image of the Father : but it sees too, it is a fit habitation for this eternal and well-beloved Son, and that he has given himself to dwell in it for ever. It considers itself as essentially united to him ; and does not separate itself even in idea ; for it says with the spouse in the Song of Solomon, “ I am my Beloved’s,  
“ and

“and my Beloved is mine.” It loves him with all its strength, is pleased with itself for loving him; yea, loves itself on that account, and because he loves it. Nor is there any fault in this: a self-love and self-complacency of this kind is so far from being contrary to the will of God, that it is a part of the divine decree in the creation; and an intelligent being cannot be happy without it. It is likewise perfectly consistent with truth and justice; and to suppose it to do otherwise, were to suppose its faculties out of order, in not loving what is really lovely. But,

If this love goes too far; if it makes the creature pursue too eagerly the contemplation of itself, so as to lessen its attention towards God; then it is no longer consistent with truth and justice, but will degenerate into a deliberate selfishness, or a love that regards self principally, and every thing for its sake. This self-love is very different from that which I have called innocent, and they ought to be carefully distinguished. The first is only a consequence of the creature's love to God: he is its centre and last end; all is referred to him; and as it loves itself only for  
his

his sake, it loves every other creature in the same way. But here it is quite the reverse: its love to God, or the creatures, is but a consequence of the love it bears to itself, and only in so far as they contribute to its happiness; if they cease to do so, it ceases to love; and as soon as it becomes not happy, its love will be turned into hatred, self being now a kind of centre or last end, to which all is referred.

No body, I think, who considers attentively this kind of self-love, which is also called *propriety*, will be at a loss to discover a root of sin strong enough to produce it in its largest extent. And as sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death, there is not an angel in heaven, but by giving way to this abominable principle, might have plunged himself into such misery as now is the portion of the devils. The champions of self-love may dress it up as finely as they please, and take pains to persuade themselves and others of an impossibility to love God from a higher motive; they may tell us, that disinterested love is a chimera, may wrest the scriptures to their own sense, and brand with the  
name

name of *mystical nonsense* the writings of those whose hearts have been inflamed with the pure love of God: but whoever has a right notion of the divine beauty, (such a notion, I mean, as reason may give, without supposing an experimental knowledge, which some have attained even in this life), will be thoroughly convinced, that no love is worthy of God but that by which he is loved for his own sake; and will so clearly see into the ugliness and deformity of the selfish principle, that he will consider what he feels of it in himself as a poison of a most deadly nature. He will with all his strength endeavour to expel it; and will not be amused with the pitiful arguments by which selfish men would reconcile it to the love of God. He will, as I have said, discover it to be a root of sin, which hiddenly, and as it were under ground, insinuates its fibres into all the faculties of the soul, every where shooting out suckers, and spreading itself into innumerable branches loaded with hellish fruits. Pride, envy, malice, spite, hatred, and rage, are some of them; but not all: the catalogue would be too large, and to make it complete impossible.

F

Who



Who can trace propriety through all its intricacies and mazes, or search into the dark caverns of a heart destitute of the Divine Light?

I do not say, however, nor is it probable, that a creature so perfect as that we have under consideration, would fall at once into such extravagant selfishness; or, by one act, of an angel become a devil. For though in the smallest seed of propriety the whole mystery of iniquity is contained; it is by consenting to it with repeated acts of the will, that it acquires strength to extinguish the love of God: and, such is the divine goodness! while there remains in the creature one spark of love, God never leaves it, nor forsakes it, but sends forth the rays of his Light, pierces through its darkness, and with inconceivable caresses invites it to return. And now is the time on which its fate depends.

If it again turns towards God with its whole heart, so as its divine faculties may be filled with the Light yet dwelling in it; instead of that beautiful creature it was before, it will see itself polluted with the stains of propriety; it will see the horrid injustice

injustice of preferring so poor an object to one infinitely perfect. And when it finds, that, notwithstanding its infidelity, this eternal almighty Being still offers himself to it, urges it to return, and with the most ardent love invites it again to the enjoyment of those delights it had so basely neglected; it will be covered with shame and confusion; and that spark of love to God yet unextinguished, will, by the divine power, be kindled into a flame, in which all its impurities will be consumed and stubble in the fire. Then is its former beauty restored, and it returns to the divine banquet, confirmed in good by the experience of its own nothingness and the all of God.

But if, on the contrary, it persists in loving itself, the esteem of its own worth will rise with its love: and that self-complacency which was innocent while it loved God, being now founded on a different principle, and confined to no rule, becomes unjust, and is properly what we call *pride*; which possesses the mind more or less in proportion as the beauty, harmony, and perfection, that gave rise to self-complacency before it was spoiled by

self-love, decay. For as this irregular love of self is always attended with a desire that it may be every way excellent, pride is an opinion that it is, or ought to be so, and can subsist with the deepest experience of indigence and insufficiency.

Here the creature begins to get new ideas of justice: it considers itself as its own centre and end; and fancies it is too good to owe its happiness to any other being whatsoever. If offers of the Divine Light are yet made to it, they are rejected with scorn. It will be independent, like God, and by the contemplation of itself thinks to raise an idea in which it may acquiesce\*. It turns therefore all its spiritual faculties this way, that it may bring forth or beget this image, this beloved son, with whom it intends to take its delight. But how miserably is it disappointed! Nothing to be found but darkness and confusion! Horrid deformity, instead of

\* *I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High, Is. xiv. 14.* "I will beget a living image of myself; and the love with which I shall love and acquiesce in it, will be a living principle, and we will be one. My nature being thus completed, I shall be like God,—self-sufficient and independent."

beauty:

beauty: instead of love and acquiescence; hatred, anguish, and rage! For sin being now completed, the monstrous production is Death.

Nothing is more evident, than that a being in this state will have its hell within it: and could we form the idea of an incorrigible state, this, I think, would be it. Even almighty power does not reach to impossibilities. To force the wills of free beings is a plain contradiction: it is to force what by the terms cannot be forced: it is only by expedients they can be worked upon, and these may fail. Yet something there is in eternal misery, misery without measure, and without end! which the mind cannot admit: it contradicts our ideas of God, of goodness, of wisdom, and even of justice; and I believe no person ever considered it coolly, and did not say within himself, This cannot be. Many passages of scripture point the other way, in words that will not bear an equivocal sense; and those on which the belief of endless misery is grounded, perhaps mean no more than a very long or indefinite time, the same words being often used where they must be so understood.



stood. It is therefore to be hoped, (but that expression is too faint; we will venture to say, it is certain), that all will be restored to order, and to happiness, by expedients, which being contrived and directed by him who formed their natures, will be undermining, consuming, and cutting away the root of sin, while nothing is felt by themselves, or perceived by others, but diabolic rage and despair; until, in the depth of their anguish, "they will cry unto the Lord, and he "will hear them \*." This seems to be the period distinguished in scripture from the last judgement, and subsequent to it, which is called *the end*: "Then cometh "the end, when he shall have delivered "up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all "rule, and all authority and power;— "that God may be all in all. And every "tongue shall praise the Lord."

\* One can hardly think that God has put his creatures so out of his power, as to leave even a possibility of their bringing themselves into an irrecoverable state; but the last remedy may be such as will lessen their happiness during all eternity, and therefore not applied till every expedient has failed. What that remedy is, it is impossible for us to know; and to make conjectures would be unfit.

SECT.



## S E C T. II.

1. *Of the creation of man. The difference betwixt his fall and that of the angels.*
2. *His state before he ate of the tree of knowledge. The nature of that tree: and why it was planted in the garden.*
3. *The consequences of the fall.*

I. **T**HE angels having fallen, it was the will of God there should be other creatures to fill their room; and for that purpose man was created. This, at least, is a common opinion: and many think the world we now inhabit was their seat and kingdom; for the chaos mentioned by Moses is more like to a ruin than the first work of a new creation. Other reasons too might be drawn from scripture; but as the belief of it has no bad consequence, if it can throw any degree of light upon other things, there will be no harm in supposing it true, though it be not supported by a formal proof; and whoever finds it not useful that way, may continue to look upon it as uncertain, and of no moment. But when

when this world of ours is said to have been the habitation of the fallen angels, it is not confined to the globe of earth we now dwell on ; and whatever was theirs, may be supposed to have been given to Adam and his posterity had they continued innocent.

Were it fit to give way to conjectures, here is a large field ; but as they have no solid foundation, I will not set down even those which have been made by others. Moses's history of the material creation is all we have to depend on ; nor have we other records of man during his state of innocence, or of his fall. We must therefore be contented with such knowledge as can be drawn from it : or if any scope is allowed to the imagination, what it offers, how reasonable soever it may appear, ought to be carefully distinguished from those things which are plain consequences of what we are told by Moses. It is the more necessary to observe this rule, that, though the imagination may sometimes hit right, it is always but guess-work ; and to advance things as true upon no surer ground, were to build chimeras, instead of explaining a sacred history.

After

After telling, that in the "beginning" God created the heaven and the earth," Moses goes on to describe the chaos, or the state things were in when the six days work began: "And the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep;" and then introduces God as acting towards a new creation: "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Thus, by the application of the divine power, all is brought into order; the darkness is dispelled from "the face of the deep;" and the earth, which was "without form, and void," is fixed into a regular shape, and adorned in the most delightful manner; the living creatures are brought forth, and, before man is created, every thing magnificently prepared for his use or pleasure: Then "God said, Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness." Here is a remarkable change in the method of creation: God said, "Let there be light; — Let there be a firmament; — Let the waters be divided from the earth; — Let the earth bring forth," &c. : but when he is going to create man, he is represented as consulting with him-

self concerning the nature of that being who was to have dominion over all his other works, and chusing the most perfect model: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him."

That this likeness is to be understood only of the spiritual part, I readily own; yet a sufficient proof of the excellency of the body may be drawn from it. It were surely unreasonable to think, that the portion of matter to which this image of God was united, in so close and intimate a way as to make with it but one being, had not all the powers, beauties, and perfections, that matter was capable to receive; or at least such as would give to the body of man a degree of pre-eminence, when compared to the bodies of inferior creatures, bearing some proportion to that of his spiritual part. And if the particular descriptions that have been made of it by persons of different characters, appear whimsical, it is owing to the narrowness of their ideas, or ours; perhaps of both. Such descriptions, therefore, are better not attempted: but their proving unsuccessful, will never be an argument against the truth of the opinion,

pinion, but with those who have forgot that man is not what he was.

Our bodies resemble more the prisons of criminals, (as they really are), than the palaces of a king; and the dominion over the inferior creatures had been given in vain, or must have been very imperfect to a being confined to a dark, heavy, unwieldy lump of matter. The texture of the human body, even in its present state, is indeed admirable, and comes up to a demonstration of the infinite wisdom and almighty power of him who made it: but the bodies of other animals are no less demonstrations of the divine power and wisdom; and the most exact knowledge of anatomy will furnish but few proofs of the superiority of man. Again, how unfit, how ill contrived for a paradisiacal state, is this machine of ours! and may we not say, the delights of an earthly paradise had been thrown away on creatures so little capable to enjoy them?

But though all imaginable perfections be allowed to the body of man, it must still be remembered, that, by being united to it, he became "a little lower than the angels." And as God never exercises



his power to diminish the happiness of his creatures, or, which is the same, to clog them with unnecessary incumbrances, there must have been a better reason for giving to man a body, than the dominion over the material creation, or the enjoyment of those pleasures that come from it. Some particular advantage must have been designed, or inconvenience avoided, by putting him thus in a situation below the dignity of his nature.

Had there been no difference betwixt the state of man and that of the angels, his fall must have been like theirs; the same rage, anguish, and despair, the same hatred of God and obstinacy in sin, must have been the consequences of it. These necessarily and always follow upon the disappointment of a violent desire, when the will is separated from the will of God. But if by any means whatsoever the desire is blunted, the degree of present misery will be proportionably less, and may become so tolerable as to be endured without rage or despair, and without hatred of God. The sensation of it may likewise, while the stupefaction continues, be lessened by the creature's own industry, if there

be other objects, by the enjoyment of which it can satisfy or amuse the inferior faculties.

Here, now, is the true ground of the difference betwixt the fall of the angels and the fall of man, or, rather, betwixt their present state and ours; for the time and manner of their trial is without the sphere of our knowledge. And here also we may see the reason of giving to man a body, so framed, as to deaden and stupefy his spiritual faculties as soon as he should withdraw himself from God; by which his absolute and irretrievable ruin was, at least for some time, prevented, and a possibility left of redeeming him from death and misery.

That the body may have this effect upon the mind, is evident from daily experience. How often is the finest genius clouded by a small disorder in the brain! A fall from a horse is sufficient to turn a philosopher into a fool. Nor is the body, on the other hand, less affected by the disorders of the mind. A violent passion of any sort will break the strongest constitution; and, again, by diseases brought on in this manner, the greatest activity and  
vehemence

vehemence of temper is sometimes changed into a stupid indolence. Now, though matter, considered abstractly, is no way concerned in moral evil; yet the spiritual and material part of man acting thus reciprocally upon one another, his body must necessarily have undergone a great and remarkable change at the fall; not suddenly, but by degrees, as the disorder of the mind increased; and it, again, being subjected to the impressions of the body, would, in the same proportion, be always coming nearer to a state of insensibility. For this there needed no new interposition of the divine power; it was but maintaining the first order, or leaving things to act in a natural way; that is, according to laws established by God at the creation.

That such a change might happen to the body as would deaden and stupefy the soul, and throw it into a lethargic state, cannot be denied: one might as well deny he had ever slept. And here the possibility is proof enough: for if it be true, that man, in this life, is insensible of his misery, and not so in the next; but as soon as the union betwixt the soul and body is dissolved,

ved, his spiritual faculties recover their natural vigour; that the body is the cause of the difference, is next to a demonstration.

I have taken some pains to evince this truth, because it seems to give a great deal of light into the nature of man's fall, the effects of it upon the inferior creatures, and the restoration of all by Jesus Christ. Of these the first to be considered is the fall: but if there was a necessity of confining ourselves to the common opinion, that the eating of the forbidden fruit was the first sin of Adam, I would leave it as a mystery not to be inquired into. Had he been in danger no other way, there had been no "tree of knowledge;" nor had he ever fallen, could innocence be so easily secured. Such outward marks of homage and obedience suit well enough with the state of earthly sovereigns; but the trial of fidelity towards God is of another nature: it is by the inward disposition of the heart that his creatures stand or fall. Do but read the second chapter of Genesis, and you will see, that Adam had begun to fall away from God, not only before he ate of the fruit of "the tree of  
" knowledge,



“knowledge,” but even before the creation of Eve. After God had ended his work, had seen that all was “very good,” and rested the seventh day, it is found not good for man to be alone. Now what is the meaning of this? Was it not good for Adam to be as God had created him? Does God need to mend his work? and was he mistaken when he saw that all was “very good?” No, certainly: but Adam had sinned; he had already withdrawn his affections from God, and could no longer relish the pure and spiritual delights of an immediate communication with him. At the same time he saw himself surrounded with innumerable objects, beautiful and perfect in their kind, and all subjected to his will; and finding an emptiness he was incapable to fill, was beginning to look for happiness among them. Now, seeing by a natural consequence (according to what has been said) he would fall into grossness proportionable to his inward disorder, by degrees he might have sunk so very low as altogether to forget God, and take up with such happiness, or rather alleviations of misery, as could be got from the inferior creation. It was therefore



fore "not good that man should be alone;" and God, always watchful over his creatures, resolves to make "a help meet for him."

There is a little objection against this, which I will but just mention. I call it *little*, because I think it has no weight, and would hardly deserve to be taken notice of, but for the custom of believing it. The earth, say they, was to be peopled, and it was on that account "not good that man should be alone;" as if God had forgot his design of having the earth peopled when he rested from his work, or could not have given man a power, singly, to produce his like. It was this power, and not a rib, that was taken from him when Eve was created.

Another objection which some would be ready to make from a wrong notion of sin, is, I think, already answered in treating of the fall of the angels. That a being endowed with spiritual and divine faculties, may sin, though it does not break an external command, cannot be doubted. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," is a law writ with indelible characters on the centre of the soul,

and needs no outward revelation to inforce the observance of it. Besides, if Moses's method of writing of the fall is attended to, it will appear, that he confines himself entirely to the circumstances and changes of man's outward state, leaving the inward to be discovered by them. The first of these was the necessity that man should have "a help meet for him;" but as there was yet no breach of an external command, he enters no farther into the reason of it, than to let us know in general, that it was "not good for man to be alone:" and having first told us the manner in which the woman was created, he goes on with the history of the fall, and its consequences with respect to the outward state of things. It is that we are now going to consider, and the nature of that sin by which our first parents, and we in them, were spiritually separated from God, and the body subjected to a temporal death.

II. It is, I think, impossible to conceive any other first cause of sin than a distraction from God; and how an intelligent being might fall into it, I have endeavour-

ed to shew you elsewhere \*. That man was exposed to this danger, must be granted, since he had divine faculties, and liberty of conduct; and whatever could distract him from God, might consequently be an occasion of sin. A self-love or self-complacency carried too far, I have already considered as the first cause of distraction from God, which as soon as it becomes voluntary, is sin: and as man was no less capable of this than the angels, it were unreasonable to impute the loss of his innocence to an irregular attachment to creatures less beautiful, less perfect, and therefore less lovely. His falling into it afterwards, was an effect of his sin, but not the cause; an effect that would shew to any superior being what would be the difference betwixt his state and that of the devils, if his sin should ever be completed. It was now not good for him to be alone; and it was to recover him from this grossness, or to prevent it, that the woman was created. His having "a help meet for him," might likewise keep his love from centring altogether on himself.

\* See the fifth and sixth paragraphs of sect. i. 3.

But whatever inward disorders this first sin might have brought upon Adam, (I call it *first*, because we have no other way of numbering the steps of his fall but by the outward changes, as they are marked by Moses); I say then, whatever inward disorders it might have brought upon him, they were not yet so great as to extinguish his love to God. He had but to turn his will, and by it his spiritual faculties towards the Divine Light, still dwelling in his heart, and all his disorders had been quickly rectified; his spiritual joys had returned, and he would have looked with amaze upon the gulf into which he was ready to plunge himself. Had this been the case with Adam and Eve, (for I speak of them now jointly), or even had they been innocent, as Adam was created, though not confirmed by the sense of past danger, the persuasions of the serpent could have had no weight; nor would the devil have attempted, by that or any other means, to seduce creatures, in whom there was no evil, no irregular desire to work upon.

But they were far, very far! from such a state: they had been still declining from God; and before the serpent tempted Eve,  
were



were upon the very brink of ruin. Can any thing be more opposite to innocence, or come nearer to a wilful rebellion against God, than that a creature desire to be higher, and more knowing, than he has been pleased to make it; and not only desire, but even be ready on the first information to do whatever it thinks may contribute to that end, though expressly forbidden by God? Again, can any thing be more gross, or shew a greater ignorance of the divine nature, than to believe that God had commanded not to eat of that fruit, lest they should come too near an equality with himself? "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die. For God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened: and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

Now,



Now, supposing them to have no desire to be as gods, to bring themselves to a level with their creator, or as near it as possible, where had been the temptation? "But perhaps this desire was natural, and it was only by acting in consequence of it that they sinned." Natural it might be after a fall, but not before it. Their state could not be a state of perfect innocence if they were under a constant necessity of self-denial: this, sure, were to begin the duty of self-denial too soon. "But it will follow, that they might have fallen, though they never had ate of the tree of knowledge." Doubtless it will, if the command concerning it had not been given: and it is that I would have you convinced of. But the command being given, their abstaining was a sure proof that they had not thrown off all regard to the divine will; wherefore their total fall or separation from God cannot be dated sooner than this outward act of disobedience and the time to which Moses has fixed it.

I would not have taken half this pains, if I thought the different ways of understanding the nature of the fall, merely points  
of

of speculation. But when I see people fancying the tree of knowledge to be a stumbling-block purposely set in man's way, and from thence drawing arguments to support their beloved decrees; while others, to avoid these inconveniencies, allegorize away the plain words of scripture, as if nothing more was meant by the whole story of the tree of knowledge, but that Adam and Eve, some how or other, fell from the state in which they were created; I think it must be of use to have it set before you in a true light. It remains therefore to give some account of the tree of knowledge; and to answer a question or two that cannot fail to be asked, viz. "Why was it planted in the garden, if it was of a poisonous nature? If not, why was man restrained from using it?"

I hope, by this time, you are satisfied that man might have fallen, though there had been no tree of knowledge: and what has been said already of Moses's method of writing, (that, in the history of the fall, he takes no particular notice of any changes in man's state, but the outward), ought to prevent your being surprised, when I tell you, that I think the death threatened,

threatened, or rather foretold to man, upon his eating the fruit of that tree, was only the temporal death of the body; and that too as a natural consequence, not a punishment, of his disobedience: for I look upon the prohibition more as a warning of danger, than a command, with a penalty annexed to the breach of it. Whether I am singular in this opinion, I really do not know: I think not; and if I was, I cannot help believing it. Represent to yourselves a father forbidding his son to eat of the fruit of a certain tree, assuring him that if he did, he must die: if, nevertheless, the son ate, and you saw him fall into violent disorders ending in death; would you not think it occasioned by some noxious quality in the tree, rather than a punishment inflicted by the father, or that he had poisoned the fruit for no other purpose but to make a dangerous trial of his son's obedience? Now, why shall we impute to God what we would not to an ordinary man? But,

“Is not the scripture clear on the other side?” If it was so, I would soon give it up: and whatever difficulties reason might suggest, or how incomprehensible

visible soever the ways of God might appear to me; I would continue to believe that they are all stamped with the divine characters of wisdom, justice, and goodness. But as to this the scripture agrees perfectly with the shape I have put it in; see the words: "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayst freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die \*." Now, if something was to be added to determine the sense, might not, 'For in that tree there is a poisonous quality;' follow naturally enough? If then we can discover on what account, or for what reason, the tree was planted in the

\* It seems to me very plain, that the spiritual death is not meant here. An eternal separation from God was not to be the consequence of this act of disobedience: for it will scarce be supposed, that man's redemption was unresolved on till after his fall. Besides, we are in this respect directed to the sense by that other passage, where God says to Adam, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." And when St Paul says, "For as by man came death, by man came also the resurrection from the dead," the reasoning would have no force, if the death was not meant of the body; for none can doubt that the resurrection was meant of it.

I

garden,



garden, all the difficulties I can foresee in this matter will, I think, be removed.

“ Where was the use or advantage to  
“ man (for it is that we have to look for)  
“ in putting it thus in his power to break,  
“ at least for a time, the union betwixt  
“ his soul and body, which was designed  
“ to continue eternally uninterrupted ? ”  
is a question that appears, at first view,  
not easily to admit of an answer.

I will now take it for granted, (and, I think, what has been said gives me sufficient reason to do so), that so long as man continued innocent, he was in no danger of neglecting the smallest notice of the divine will, though no damage to himself had been to follow. Thus, though the tree of knowledge stood in the midst of the garden, it was sin, and it only, that made death possible; for it alone made man capable to disobey. The question then comes to be, Whether the spiritual disorder in man being come to such a height as was not to be rectified but by extraordinary methods; whether, I say, extraordinary methods might not also be necessary for restoring the body to its primitive state, whose disorders, as has been observed, would be  
propor-



proportionable to those within? If this be the case, the advantage to man is plain: and, without very good reasons to the contrary, I think we must believe with the apostle, that the body "is sown in corruption, to be raised in incorruption."

To ask how this was necessary, would be going a step too far. Considerable advances have been made in natural philosophy; yet how superficial are its discoveries! how narrow its bounds! The knowledge therefore of this must be left to that time when the secret things of material as well as spiritual systems shall be revealed.

Thus you see in general, that, in certain circumstances, the temporal death of the body might not only not be a punishment, but might even be advantageous for man: and that in it a remedy was provided for the bodily disorders which would naturally follow upon a total fall. The next thing to be accounted for is, the manner of bringing it about. And in that too, I think, there are evident marks of love and goodness.

Man being endued with liberty, was free to stand or fall. He might withdraw

his love from God, and fix it on himself, or other objects : he might be inattentive to the inward calls of God ; and, by giving himself up to sensual pleasures, come to be only affected by outward things. Then would an external law be necessary ; such a law as would make him remember his dependence, and give sensible impressions of the danger of not acting in conformity to the divine will. Nothing could be better calculated for this purpose than the command concerning the tree of knowledge. Nothing was more proper to work upon his fear, than the danger of losing those enjoyments in which he had placed his happiness ; or more likely to convince him of his dependence, than thus to see the precarious footing on which he stood. Again, howsoever his spiritual intercourse with God might be lessened, this alone was sufficient to keep him under a constant sense of the divine presence : and the smallest inclination to disobey, would be, even to himself, a proof of the irregularity of his will, and consequently of his inward disorder, when perhaps he might be too gross to perceive it by another way. Besides, though these precautions should

should prove ineffectual, and man, by a resolute neglect of the divine will, and a blind and rebellious pursuit of what he falsely took to be his interest, should complete his sin, and make himself unworthy of farther care; yet he was not to be given over for lost: his recovery was still possible, and new and extraordinary methods were to be tried. But these also might be ineffectual, if he adhered obstinately to himself, or the creatures: his attachments to them must be broken, and self-love banished from his heart; which could only be done by making him see and feel the approaches of misery, with a consciousness that he had brought it upon himself. Without this, a sudden change in his state would probably have fixed him in an opposition to God, whom he would then consider as a being acting by caprice: and a desire of equality would appear reasonable, as the only way to secure a happiness which pride would make him think he deserved. It must be shame, therefore, and self-condemnation, that could bring him to acquiesce in the divine justice, and to enter with chearfulness and submission upon a state of penitence, severe in appearance,

pearance, but absolutely necessary for his purification and recovery. It is in that state we are now to consider him: and the nature of it will appear in observing the consequences of the fall.

III. To account for the present state of things, has been long a troublesome task to those who did not think of a fall, or would not believe it. Thus many fruitless attempts have been made to discover the cause of the outward disorders in nature, and the greater inward disorders in the spirit of man. The Manichéans had recourse to two contrary principles, the one of good, the other of evil, both eternal; and Epicurus, to his atoms. The Stoicks had juster sentiments: they saw there could not be two eternal principles; and that the work, with all its blemishes, was too good to be the effect of chance: yet the method they took, though less ridiculous, was full as unsatisfactory.

“ The universe was considered as one  
“ great system, of which every particular  
“ system was a part: and as the whole was  
“ made, so also was it governed, by one  
“ Eternal Universal Mind, infinitely  
“ powerful,



“ powerful, wise, good, and perfect. All  
 “ the parts were formed with a view to  
 “ the general good, and therefore differ-  
 “ ently fashioned, ordered, and directed,  
 “ as was most subservient to it. This,  
 “ now, being the great end, and, as it  
 “ were, a fixed point to which all tended,  
 “ whatever was necessary for attaining it  
 “ in the most perfect manner, was on that  
 “ very account just, reasonable, and fit;  
 “ however some particular parts might be  
 “ affected by it. It was therefore impro-  
 “ per to pronounce any thing evil, for its  
 “ being so with respect to us, or that part  
 “ of the universe in which we are most  
 “ immediately concerned; since it was in  
 “ itself really and absolutely good, good  
 “ even to us, because it contributed to  
 “ the greatest good of the whole \*.”

This was their way of arguing; and  
 thus did some great men endeavour to  
 satisfy themselves concerning those things  
 which seemed inconsistent with infinite  
 wisdom and goodness, and almighty

\* Such was the system of the best Stoicks; — their  
 notions of God and nature extremely perplexed; their  
*anima mundi* (to which the souls of men were to be uni-  
 ted) an unintelligible something.



power. And I think endeavouring was the farthest it could go. Would not the universal system have been more perfect; if its greatest good had been attainable without any of those things which we call *evil*, and even by the Stoicks would be acknowledged to be so, were they not supposed necessary for the general good? To be convinced of this, we need not make reflections on moral evil; nor raise the tragical ideas which the miseries of the world would easily furnish. Let us only suppose the greatest good was to be purchased at the expence of pain for an hour, yea but a minute, to one of the lowest animals; even this were a blemish, if things could possibly have been so ordered as to make it unnecessary. Whatever the Stoicks might talk of their universe, we can imagine as many distinct systems as we please. If then there was one, whose greatest good was attained without this almost imperceptible degree of evil, we could easily tell which of the two was the most perfect; nor do I know of any thing that could or ought to hinder us from concluding some mistake or flaw in the constitution of the first; so that it is the necessity, and it only,

ly, that can make the smallest evil not an imperfection. But whence this necessity? Did not God make all things as he pleased? or did any thing resist his will? When he brought the universe out of nothing, did it come up different from what he expected? or did he not know what was best or most perfect? Any of these would argue want of power, or want of wisdom; and not to will things to be in the best manner, were a defect in goodness\*. For these and many other reasons,

\* Here the word *best* is not to be understood as if things could not have been made otherwise, but only that every creature must have been so made, that, upon its first existence, it should find no contrariety within, or desire unfit to be satisfied; and that with respect to outward circumstances, it should be so placed as not to meet with things disagreeable, or to want objects to satisfy its desires. This now being all that is necessary for giving such happiness as it is capable of, the system of which it is to be a part, (if there be not other reasons), requires no greater degree of perfection than will answer this end, to make it true that God has willed it to be in the best manner; and this degree of perfection we must believe it has, or had, unless we can believe that God, in creating, has intended the misery of his creatures, not their happiness.

To talk of worlds, as parts of an universal whole, and hence to infer a necessity, that, by the very constitution of things, some creatures must be miserable, at least fall short of happiness, is saying neither more nor less, than that God is not infinitely powerful, wise, and good.

sons, (for much might be said on this subject), it is plain there could not be the

Different species of beings must have different kinds of happiness; and we shall even suppose, that what conduces to the happiness of one species, may lessen that of another. Must a middle situation therefore be contrived, that some be not completely miserable? I can see no reason for it. Could not God have furnished a world to each species, or joined them with beings of natures not so widely different, or made some little variation in theirs, that they might agree better?

But say they, "All nature is linked together in a due gradation of beings: there must then be such a creature as man, man as he now is."

Shall we ever be paying so sacred a regard to this old poetical, or, if they will, philosophical chain of nature, that, for fear of breaking a link, God himself shall be bound by it, and forced to create a creature weak, rational, and wretched, only to fill one of the empty spaces betwixt perfect happiness and misery, or betwixt pure intelligences and the brute creation, and to make for him a habitation wherein natural good and evil should be so mixed as to prevent his rising above, or sinking below, his own link of the fatal universal chain? Here is a fancy well enough suited to a creating Jupiter under the power of Fate. Upon this hypothesis, and upon no other, it would be true, supposing man, and every thing about him, created just as we see them; it would be true, I say, that all was made in the best manner; or, in other words, God had done his best: but if he was a good being, he would be sorry he could do no better.

If so powerless a God be the God of our modern Stoicks, these mighty champions for reason against revelation! they may as well take off the mask, and dropping into Spinoza's scheme, acknowledge no God but nature.

least

least mixture of evil, moral or natural, in the first constitution of things, but that it must have come by the mismanagement of free agents; other creatures, animate or inanimate, being incapable to contradict the laws which are set to them.

The most part, and by far the greatest, of those evils or miseries to which mankind is subjected, are no other than natural effects of sin; and the rest are consequences of that change in the material creation which became necessary after the fall, that the earth, and every thing upon it, might be always adapted to the circumstances of man. It is in this way the curse ought to be understood; and the words shew plainly it was not pronounced as a punishment. A beautiful and glorious world, designed for innocent creatures, had been an improper place for doing penitence in. Self-denial was now necessary; but how difficult must it have been, may I not say, impossible? in an earthly paradise, when the ruins of that beauty, and the dregs (I can call them no other) of those pleasures which were prepared for the outward senses, have charms we can hardly resist!



Man had indeed become unworthy, and, if considered in himself, was no longer an object of the divine care. The living and eternal Word or image of the Father, the only begotten Son, "in whom" alone he is well pleased, was now no more to be seen in him; his spirit, which was made to be the throne of God, was lying in darkness and confusion, more like to a chaos than "a temple of the Holy Ghost;" it was therefore impossible that God should take delight in him, or place his love upon a creature in whom there was nothing lovely. It was, on the other hand, as impossible for man to do any thing for his own relief, or by his endeavours to make himself again worthy of the divine care. That beauty, order, and purity, which is natural to innocent creatures, was lost; the love of self was the spring of his desires, and interest the motive and end of all his actions. He might wish for happiness, and set all his powers and faculties to work to procure it, but could never by his own strength so reform and purify his heart, as to make it a fit habitation for the eternal Light; or, by selfish desires of happiness, merit the return  
of



of the divine presence: nor could he change his nature so as to be pleased with darkness, be empty and yet satisfied, and enjoy peace and tranquillity in the midst of wild disorder. Whatever then is the state of the devils, must have been his, as soon as the union betwixt the soul and body was broken, (which his disobedience had also made very precarious, and subjected to a thousand accidents): for the spiritual faculties being then at liberty, and those shackles dropped off which hindered them from acting with their natural vigour, he must have felt his misery as great as it really was, with all the consequences of a total separation from God.

But there was for man a Mediator, of infinite merit; one to whom nothing could be refused. The eternal and beloved Son presents himself to the Father, offers to satisfy justice, and, with desires flaming with the purest charity, begs that man may find mercy; that "the Sun of righteousness" may shine upon him, and the treasures of grace be opened; that if, drawn by the charms of infinite beauty, he would yet return to God, and submit to the purifying operations of the Holy Spirit,

Spirit, his heart might again be fitted and prepared to receive the bright and resplendent image of the Deity, and with it the peace, joy, and happiness, which was from the beginning designed for him \*.

Thus did the Son of God undertake the redemption of men, who were thereby justly intitled to the divine care, and to every grace necessary for working out their salvation. Justly, I say; not for any merit or worth in them, but for his sake, and in consideration of him who is “the Beloved of the Father,” and had interceded for man; for it was highly just that all his desires should be granted. And that his intercession might not be ineffectual, the earth was new-modeled, and its beauty defaced, that the chains by which men are bound and enslaved to sin, might the more easily be broken.

The first remarkable alteration was upon the body of man. It was suddenly brought into a state of grossness and corruptibility, horrible no doubt to those who but a moment before had seen themselves clothed with glory and honour. That

\* See sect. iv. 2.

there was some extraordinary change, is certain; the words of scripture will not bear another sense. We are told, that as soon as they had ate, "the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew they were naked;" and a little after, "that they were ashamed." This change, whatever it was, seems to have been the natural effect of a poisonous quality in the fruit; for as yet there was no visible interposition of the divine power: and it was necessary, or best, it should be so; that the sense of their misery might be attended with a conviction of their having brought it upon themselves. For, as was observed already, it was only by shame and self-condemnation that they could be prepared to bear with patience the loss of those outward glories, both in themselves and the objects that surrounded them, in the immoderate enjoyment of which they had begun to place their happiness.

But the goodness of God, and his care of them, appears still farther, in declaring the intention to redeem man before the curse was pronounced upon the earth. Had the face of nature been changed ere they had assurance that God would be reconciled

conciled to them, instead of shame and self-condemnation, despair, leading to diabolic rage, might have taken possession of their hearts. To prevent this, God was graciously pleased to call them unto him: the mystery of the Messiah's incarnation, and the method chosen by infinite wisdom for the redemption of men, is revealed in the words addressed to the serpent: "I will put enmity," says God, "between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." They are then warned of the curse ready to fall upon the earth; but at the same time are told it was for their sake: the nature of their penitence is also described, I mean the outward; for the inward purification of the heart being to be performed by the secret operations of the Holy Spirit, the manner of it was left undiscovered. "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee: and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for



“ for out of it wast thou taken: for dust  
 “ thou art, and unto dust shalt thou re-  
 “ turn.”

Here, you see, all is done for the sake of man: and death, or the separation of the soul from the body, is foretold, not surely as a punishment; for it is expressly mentioned as that which was to put an end to the labour and sorrow here enjoined. And that this painful state might not continue too long; they are debarred from the tree of life, “ lest (as the scripture  
 “ faith) they should put forth their hands,  
 “ and take also thereof, and eat, and live  
 “ for ever.” For, as a firm adherence to God, with an unlimited resignation of all the faculties, is necessary for the purification of the spirit; and penitence and self-denial for that of the soul; so also the body must return to the dust from whence it was taken, before it can recover its former glory, or be made fit to inhabit the new heavens and the new earth which are to come. “ It is sown in dishonour, it is  
 “ raised in glory: it is sown in weakness,  
 “ it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.—  
 “ For since by man came death, by man  
 L “ came



“came also the resurrection from the dead.

“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ

“shall all be made alive.”

But it behoved Christ to suffer. “He

“grew up as a tender plant, and as a root

“out of dry ground: he had no form nor

“comeliness: and when they saw him,

“there was no beauty that they should

“desire him. He was despised and reject-

“ed of men, a man of sorrows, and ac-

“quainted with grief: and they hid as it

“were their faces from him; he was de-

“spised, and they esteemed him not. Sure-

“ly he hath born our griefs, and carried

“our sorrows: yet they did esteem him

“stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

“But he was wounded for our transgres-

“sions, he was bruised for our iniqui-

“ties: the chastisement of our peace was

“upon him, and with his stripes we are

“healed. All we, like sheep, have gone

“astray: we have turned every one to

“his own way, and the Lord hath laid

“on him the iniquity of us all. He was

“oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he

“opened not his mouth. He was brought

“as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a

“sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he

“opened

“opened not his mouth. He was taken  
“from prison, and from judgement: and  
“who shall declare his generation? for  
“he was cut off out of the land of the  
“living: for the transgression of the peo-  
“ple was he stricken. And he made his  
“grave with the wicked, and with the  
“rich in his death, because he had done  
“no violence, neither was any deceit in  
“his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to  
“bruise him, he hath put him to grief:  
“when thou shalt make his soul an offer-  
“ing for sin, he shall see his seed, he  
“shall prolong his days, and the pleasure  
“of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.  
“He shall see of the travel of his soul, and  
“shall be satisfied: by his knowledge  
“shall my righteous servant justify many:  
“for he shall bear their iniquities. There-  
“fore will I divide him a portion with  
“the great, and he shall divide the spoil  
“with the strong: because he hath pour-  
“ed out his soul unto death: and he was  
“numbered with the transgressors, and  
“he bare the sin of many, and made in-  
“tercession for the transgressors.”

It was thus that man was to be redeem-

ed from the bondage and slavery of sin, as it is admirably described by Isaiah in his 53d chapter. And I have often wondered to see people racking their brains for reasons why God would not save mankind on other terms ; and others pretending to unbelief, because of the *incomprehensibility* (as they call it) of that upon which the Christian religion is founded. That the Son of God should take upon him the human nature, be despised, spit upon, buffeted, scourged, and crucified, like a malefactor, is to them foolishness. To answer these, some of the first sort have thought it necessary so to explain the nature of justice, as if it could not be satisfied another way : but is it not enough if it appears by the surest proofs human reason can suggest, that this method God has chosen ? Shall we pretend to limit him to our narrow capacities, or assume a privilege of judging his actions ?

But as it may seem, that how much soever Adam stood in need of a mediator, and however necessary a change in the material creation was for him, his fall ought to have had no consequences for the rest of mankind ; I shall, before inquiring in-

to the truth of the Christian religion, or the nature of those proofs on which our belief is founded, take notice of the difficulties concerning original sin, that you may the more easily perceive the justice and uniformity of the ways of God: for by it every one of Adam's race comes to be in the same circumstances with him, under the same necessity of doing penitence; and life, in general, a state of purification, as well as of trial,

## S E C T. III.

1. *Original sin a plain and natural consequence of the fall, if the souls of men are by tradition. The supposed unphilosophicalness of that opinion no argument against the truth of it.*
2. *The ancient opinion of a pre-existence examined with respect to revelation.*
3. *A view of the clearness and solidity of the proofs upon which a belief of the Christian religion is founded.*

I. **S**PIRITUAL substances, or distinct principles of life and thought, may be brought into existence by an immediate

mediate and particular creation of every individual, or by creating one or more endued with a power to produce others like themselves. (This last is disputed; upon what ground, shall be seen afterwards; meantime we may take the liberty to suppose it). Now whatever beings are created immediately by God, must be perfect in their kind; that is, they will infallibly answer the idea which the divine wisdom had formed. Guilt they can have none; for we are considering them in the very moment of creation, with all their faculties, desires, and affections, in a disposition or readiness to act according to the tendencies which God has given them; or, in other words, in conformity to his will. This undoubtedly is their state before they begin to act; and there cannot be a truer innocence, or more perfect purity: so, in this way of coming into existence, original guilt or sin, in the strict acceptation of it, is inconceivable; yea, it is absolutely impossible.

But because it is hard to distinguish betwixt the first point of existence, and the time in which they begin to act, it is, or may be, said, that if a creature, by the first act of  
its



its will, determines itself to that which is evil, the guilt thereby contracted may be called *original*. Not to dispute about words, we shall allow original guilt to mean no more. But then, as the creature may determine itself to evil, may it not also determine itself to good? and is not the probability vastly on this side, seeing all the desires and affections tend hither? or rather, is it not evidently absurd to suppose that any being would act otherwise? Yet if there be no other way of accounting for original sin, every one of the souls of men must, as soon as it is created, act directly contrary to the natural bent of its desires and affections.

For solving this difficulty, recourse is had to the body. Some are willing to allow so far to man a power of producing his like. Thus the bodies of all men being derived from Adam, and consequently in the same disorderly state that his was in after the fall, the souls which are created to enliven them, are so influenced by their disorders, that the will becomes depraved, and the desires and affections irregular, and tending to evil. In short, they are precisely what Adam was: and a  
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fin with which they had been unconcerned if joined to any other portion of matter, changes their whole spiritual frame, and, by doing so, becomes original.

These are the difficulties concerning original sin, upon the supposition of an immediate and particular creation of every soul; and this, I think, is the way of answering them: but how to reconcile this account of it with the divine justice and goodness, I leave to those who can satisfy themselves with it: For my part, whatever be the cause of original sin, I could almost venture to say, this cannot. But if the souls as well as the bodies of men are derived from Adam, all these difficulties vanish; and sin is as natural to the one, as it is to the other not to fly. As the tree is, such must the fruit be: the will, the faculties, the desires, and affections, are all tainted in their root; and, if placed in an angelic body, would be irregular, and tend to evil. Thus every human soul exists in a state of separation from God; not by any judicial act on his part, or imputation of sin; but because its divine and spiritual faculties are in disorder, and, while they continue so, incapable of being united

united to the Deity. This now is the true meaning of original sin. It is a state of the mind, not an act: for no act, or guilt, in any other sense, can be original to a being that has a beginning.

We are told, however, with a sort of philosophical authority, (and great disputes have been about it), that it is impossible spirits can exist but by an immediate creation. But why impossible? Only, I suppose, because we cannot conceive it: the impossibility here cannot be founded on another reason. Not conceivable then, and not possible, are the same. At this rate many things which are in fact, or rather every thing, is impossible. Let them tell us, for instance, how they conceive that matter or something could be brought out of nothing. Again, when spirits are created, and bodies prepared for them, how are they shut up? and what locks and doors are made use of to keep them in? In natural philosophy people had need be very cautious in affirming what is, or is not, possible. We deal but in superficies, while the first principles of things, with their inward springs and motions, lie too deep to be come at. Nor have we,

for the most part, another way of coming to the knowledge of causes but by their effects. Thus because we see to a demonstration, that all bodies tend to their respective centres, and at the same time act upon one another as if there was in every body a principle of attraction and gravitation, we conclude without hesitating, that there is such a principle, or something which has the same effect : and the conclusion is just. Yet whether this something be almighty power itself acting immediately upon matter, or only an effect of it, the way in which it acts is inconceivable ; so that if our conceptions are to be the standard of possibilities, matter must for ever continue in the same state, or every separate piece must have a living agent to move it about.

Now, to apply this argument to the present case, we see by experience, that every human soul, as soon as it begins to act, discovers itself to be in a state of disorder ; and we know by revelation that it is so, not by accident, but naturally ; but we know also, that God is not the author of disorder, and that all his works are good and perfect : we conclude therefore, it is  
not

not immediately from him, but from some created being to which he has given a power of producing its like ; tracing up this original disorder or sin to Adam, who fell from the good and perfect state in which he was created. And we think this conclusion just, (though we know not, and perhaps cannot conceive, when or how the separate existence begins), because otherwise we must believe God to be the author of sin, or impute to him injustice; in putting innocent creatures in such circumstances that they must necessarily become guilty ; either of which would be more absurd than to philosophize ourselves into a necessity of believing, that every time a stone is thrown in the air there is an invisible hand ready to convey it back to the earth.

But though the real and absolute necessity, that all the children of Adam pass through a state of purification, is evident from this way of accounting for original sin ; it may be thought somewhat hard, and even not consistent with the ideas which I have been endeavouring to give of the divine nature, that the fate of a world should be put into the hands of one man.



The hardship, however, will not appear so great, if it be considered, that a remedy was provided even against the worst, by which the fate of every man comes to be in his own hand: and it is more than probable, that they who are not benefited by the graces merited for mankind by Jesus Christ, and offered to all, would have made no better account of a state of innocence than Adam did. Besides, how do we know but if Adam had stood, the advantages of being descended from him might far overbalance the danger of undergoing a short penitence? And seeing the redemption by Jesus Christ is full, and that all things are to be repaired by him, those advantages will not be lost.

But as many are not able to pass over the philosophic difficulties with which this method of explaining original sin is attended, I shall next consider that ancient opinion of a pre-existence, as ancient at least as Socrates and Plato \*; who observing that the present state of things was a state of disorder, concluded that the souls of men must have existed, and some how

\* Philosophic names of greater antiquity might be mentioned; but these are more known.

or other fallen, before they were sent to inhabit these mortal bodies. This opinion is so extremely rational, and goes so far towards accounting for the disorders both of the natural and moral world, that if, upon examination, it be found to agree with the scripture-doctrine of the creation, the fall, original sin, and the redemption by Jesus Christ, I cannot see a good reason why it should not be received by those who reject the former because of the philosophic difficulties with which it is pressed. Let us try then what sort of system will arise upon joining the opinion of a pre-existence to the truths which are revealed in scripture,

II. WE shall suppose a certain number of angelic spirits fallen, or rather falling, from the innocent righteous state in which they were created; and that, to prevent their total ruin, God sees it necessary or fit to lessen their natural activity, and to blunt the edge of their appetites, that their bent to evil may not act with all its force: and as he has it likewise in view to purify them from the corruption of sin, and then to restore them to the full possession

session of that happiness from which they have fallen, this degree of stupefaction (I cannot find a properer word) must be brought upon them, not by a change in their spiritual nature, or by impairing its faculties; but by such a way as will only hinder those faculties for a time from acting with their natural vigour. How this might be effectuated, we know by experience, as I have observed elsewhere: it was but giving them vehicles or bodies more or less subtile, and, without any change in the spiritual frame, their vivacity could be brought so low as to correspond with whatever methods of purification or trial infinite wisdom had appointed. And if it was the will of God that these spirits should pass into this new state from one of silence, or absolute inactivity, without any remembrance of former things, it was but so fashioning the bodies they were to inhabit, that an evolution of the parts and organs should be necessary, and their state would, or might, be that of the human fœtus in the first moment, or what we suppose to be the first moment, of its existence. And if this evolution of parts depended upon the concurrence

rence of certain circumstances, and these upon the divine will, it is plain the state of silence or inactivity might continue short or long, ages, or minutes only; and that of action and sensibility which was to follow, might be brought to perfection all at once, or by slow degrees, as infinite wisdom should determine. Nor is it less evident, that one only might be brought upon the stage at first, and be made, as it were, a channel through which all the rest must pass to this new state of purification and trial; who being already lodged in their respective bodies, might be contained in one another, and all in the person of this one, and so remain in a state of silence and inactivity, till called to action, each in his own time, by a concurrence of those circumstances appointed by God for operating that evolution of the bodily parts, which putting an end to the former state of silence, gives a beginning to what we call *life*.

Here now is a natural enough account of the generation of men. May I not say, philosophical too? That spirits may be confined to certain portions of matter, will be denied only by one set of people, those

I mean who deny there is such a thing as spirit; that a spirit may be stupefied by the body, experience will not suffer us to question; that the portion of matter in which a spirit is confined, may be infinitely, that is inconceivably, little, must be true, if it be true that matter is divisible to infinity, or to an inconceivable littleness; and that one of those portions of matter in which a spirit dwells, may be contained in another of the same kind, both in a third, and so on, will not be thought absurd, or improbable, by any one who has ever heard of the opinion which generally obtains concerning the production of trees, and all sorts of vegetables, viz. that vegetation is but an evolution of parts already formed in the seed, fully and really formed, with roots, branches, leaves, and fruit; in this fruit seeds, and in each of these seeds a tree formed in the same manner; and so backward to the first of the kind, and forward as far as imagination can go. Thus it will be easy to conceive, that the souls of men, formerly angelic spirits, might all have been contained in Adam, in a state of silence and inactivity, but of real existence, each in his

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own particular body, and so placed or situated, as to appear on the stage of this world in the fittest time and manner, or to pass into another state without appearing at all. Nor do I believe that Reason can form a solid argument against the possibility of this hypothesis. But a thing may seem reasonable and not be true; we must therefore examine it by other rules: Revelation is a surer guide than Reason, and furnishes a higher authority than that of Socrates and Plato.

And now, in the very beginning of this inquiry, we meet with something which has the appearance of an invincible difficulty. God says, [Gen. i. 26.], "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness;" — and [ver. 27.] "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him." — If these expressions are to be understood in the common way, pre-existence must be given up as irreconcilable to revelation. But as it was an opinion among the Jews; as it was believed by some of the fathers, by others of them not absolutely rejected; and entertained by many of later date, who were beyond all suspicion of disregarding

ing the scripture, and of too clear a judgement to overlook the present difficulty, and some others which must occur to every inquirer; I say, as it comes to us supported in this manner, and is in itself far from being unreasonable, we ought to be very sure of the meaning of scripture before we dismiss it as erroneous and false. For my part, how ill soever I may succeed in endeavouring to remove the difficulties, I shall not take upon me to censure it in that way; and in this I have before me the example of Jesus Christ. The question of the disciples, [John ix.], Whether the blind man or his parents had sinned, that he was born blind? plainly implies their belief of a pre-existence, which their master does not condemn: he only tells them, it was not for any of these causes: "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents."

This passage, surely, is strong enough to prevent a rash censure, as it shews that the opinion was not attended with bad consequences with regard to what Jesus Christ had taught concerning himself, or was to teach; or to the truths of that religion which he came to establish: so far,

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at least, our Saviour has determined in its favour; and, be it true or false, we need not a surer proof of its being harmless. Some would even conclude more: they would say, pre-existence must be true, else the disciples had been undeceived; and greater stretches have been made to support a favourite opinion. But it ought to be considered, that whether the souls of men pre-existed or not, is really but a point in natural philosophy, and as such, either side of the question might be as harmlessly believed as that the sun went about the earth. We see by the whole tenor of the scripture, that God takes no care to rectify mistakes of that kind; and in such cases, every one may chuse for himself that hypothesis which he thinks most rational, provided things of greater consequence, and precisely determined by revelation, are not contradicted by it. And this in the present case is what we are to inquire, beginning with Moses's account of the creation.

The earth being formed, and all done that was necessary to make it a fit habitation for the creature who was to be lord of it, God is introduced as declaring his in-

tention to make man, that is, a creature consisting of soul and body, two distinct natures, but so united as to become but one being : and this complex idea is so essentially the idea of man, that he cannot be said to have existed till the two natures were joined. Whatever time God made the soul and body, it was only when he willed their union, and thereby completed the human nature, that he made man. A human soul and a human body might exist sooner, but not man ; and for any thing we know, both may have existed when God said, " Let us make man."

" But, he adds, *in our image* ; which " fixes the sense to the spiritual part, " that alone being *in the image of God* ; and " therefore when it is said afterwards, that " *God created man in his own image*, the " creation must be understood of the spirit of man."

This, now, is just the question ; and perhaps all that need be inferred from the first passage is, that God declares his resolution to infuse into that portion of matter which was to be formed into a human body, a spirit made in his own image ; and whether that spirit was made then, or  
long

long before, it makes no odds: and so the sense of the second passage will be, that God executed his resolution, and did infuse a spirit, made (no matter when) “in his image,” into a body formed of “the dust of the ground;” that is, in scripture-language, “breathed into it the breath of life.” It was this act that created man: the body was, or might be, formed before; but that body was not man: the spirit also might be formed, and still there was no man; the two natures were not yet joined, and consequently no creature answering to the divine idea yet existed: the intention then to unite these two natures, was properly the intention to make or create; and the act by which they were united, the act of creation. Were we sure of a pre-existence, this explanation, I believe, would not be thought unnatural: and there I leave it.

The next difficulty arises from the commonly received notion of Adam’s fall. He is looked upon as innocent till he ate “the forbidden fruit.” But, without any view to this opinion of a pre-existence, I have shewn in another place\*, that the

\* See the last three paragraphs of sect. ii. 1.

beginning



beginning of his fall must be dated sooner; and if so, it may be carried back to the state in which we are supposing him to have existed before he was sent down to inhabit this lower world. We know from sacred writ what completed his fall, and made a Redeemer necessary; we know likewise from it, or we may know, that he fell not all at once; but what the first sin was, or when committed, God has not thought fit to reveal. In this point then we are at liberty, and may believe it was committed here, or elsewhere, as either of these opinions suit best with things to which revelation engages, or expressly commands, our faith. And as original sin is one of these, one too which may seem hard, and to some impossible, to be explained upon the supposition of a pre-existence, we shall see whether both may not be true. If it be found upon trial that they cannot, let us not scruple to throw up an opinion, how rational soever it may appear, when an article of faith (for such I think we have reason to call original sin) is contradicted by it. But again, if this article of faith be intelligible upon the supposition of a pre-existence, and upon

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no other hypothesis save one, viz. that the souls of men are by traduction, it will be at least a presumption, if not a proof, that one of the two is right.

When God formed the body of Adam of "the dust of the ground," we are now to conceive (and we can easily do it) that he formed in the same manner the bodies of all his children, placing them in one another, each in its own order, and all in the body of Adam; and when he joined the soul of Adam to his body, or, as Moses expresses it, "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life," we are to conceive likewise, that, by the same act, he joined the souls of all men to their respective bodies. Thus all existed in Adam, really existed, every soul in its own body; and by this union the impetuosity of the bent to evil contracted in a former state, was so lessened, that it was possible for them not to sin, perhaps easy. This, if pre-existence be true, was the state of innocence in which man was created; and, I think, the scripture does not oblige us to believe otherwise. In this state it was possible, yea much more than possible, to contradict and restrain every tendency to evil; and

and by an easy, I had almost said a natural, self-denial, the posterity of Adam might have been purified from every spot of corruption, and confirmed in good. But then, if Adam, by his own mismanagement, lost the advantages of this state, his children by unavoidable consequence might be involved in the fatal catastrophe.

That a spirit may influence its own body, and be influenced by it, and that one body may be so situated as to be influenced by another, daily experience will not suffer us to call in question: the body of Adam therefore might be affected by his fall, (the scripture says it was), and consequently every soul and body existing in him, might be really, naturally, and unavoidably affected too. And if the constitution of Adam's body was so changed or broken, that the tendency to evil contracted in a former state, could act with all its force, or a force too great for him to withstand, his case, if no remedy was provided, would be entirely desperate, without regard to the actual sin by which he had brought this misfortune on himself. Just so, if by a contagious influence the constitution of every body existing in him,

was

was changed or broken in the same manner, the souls inhabiting those bodies, would be in the same desperate case though no actual sin was by them committed: they had, like him, contracted in a former state a tendency to evil, strong enough to hurry them on from bad to worse; and the sluices by which its impetuosity was restrained being now broke down, or rendered unserviceable, a new method of being enabled to go through the necessary purification was to them as needful as it was to Adam.

Thus original sin, as it means only a disorder derived from Adam, (and sure it can mean no more), is very intelligible upon the supposition of a pre-existence. No pollution is here fixed on pure and innocent spirits, by thrusting them into polluted bodies; no imputation of guilt asserted; nor any thing that will not agree to the strictest idea of justice. The whole depends on this easy concession, or rather undeniable truth, that a creature may so exist as to be incapable to act, yet not incapable to receive impressions. And whatever inconveniencies such a situation may be attended with, the advantages may be

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greater, and the chances of being benefited vastly more, than those on the other side. That it might be so, is plain; and that it was so, must be true, since we are placed here by a being whose power, wisdom, and goodness, are infinite.

But as every one cannot be satisfied with general reflections, nor take the trouble of making particular ones for himself, I shall endeavour to set this matter in such a light, that some, at least, of the advantages designed for mankind will appear; not pretending to discover all, or to fathom the abyfs of infinite goodness and mercy.

A common opinion it is, and not without foundation in scripture, that the angelic hosts are divided into different hierarchies; each, so to speak, under its own leader, and subordinate princes. (Powers, dominions, principalities, &c. are often mentioned; and there is nothing in the thought that need be shocking, even to those who have the most delicate and exalted ideas of the heavenly state). The souls of men may have been all of one hierarchy; but we are under no necessity to believe that all of this hierarchy fell, or that  
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all fell alike. Such as fell not, kept their place in heaven, and may be guardian-angels. To some whole nations may be trusted, (there is something in the book of Daniel that favours this opinion), to others the care of particular persons; and the different tasks may be allotted with regard to their capacity and choice: the princely angels will have a more universal charge; while others of lower rank may be employed in advancing the purification of a few, with whom perhaps they have been formerly united by uncommon ties of friendship and love. Such as fell but little, let it be never so little, must be purified, and are sent to act their part here: of these Adam may have fallen the least, or been of a superior station, and upon one or both of these accounts chosen to begin the new scene; the rest may have been so placed, as to appear on the stage at proper times, as their example or instruction would be most useful to mankind, and to them what was said to Jeremiah, (Jer. chap. i. 5.), may be applied; "Before I  
 "formed thee in the belly, I knew thee;  
 "and before thou camest forth out of the  
 "womb, I sanctified thee, and I ordain-

"ed thee a prophet unto the nations." Patriarchs, as Enoch, Noah, &c.; prophets, apostles, and some philosophers, are all to be numbered in this class, and many more who have lived at different periods from Adam to our days, or will live in the ages yet to come.

And now let us turn our eyes upon Adam in his paradisiacal state; conversing with angels, yea conversing with God; his duty set before him, and the dismal consequences of a false step: let us consider him as the strongest spirit, and the best of mankind, and therefore least in danger of a new fall: let us suppose him faithful, and by a right management growing daily more and more pure; influencing his immediate children in their tender age, and encouraging them to the practice of virtue by his precepts and example. Was such education of no value? was it no advantage to be thus habituated, if not confirmed, in good, before they entered upon action? or can we conceive a better way to secure their obedience? Let us go on with the reflection, and consider the next generation under the eye of parents such as Adam, their care the same, and the success equal;

equal: let the new generation be considered as acting the same part in its turn, and so on from generation to generation. Thus with each particular person the trial had been almost over before he was trusted to himself; every tendency to evil being rooted out, or more than balanced by a contrary habit: whereas had all been brought upon the stage at once, the weakest must have stood on as slippery ground as Adam. His fall shews that the post was a post of danger; and if he only was qualified to maintain it, as being the strongest and the purest, the rest could have no lay, if their tendency to evil was not first balanced by a contrary habit.

But here an objection occurs: "If the force of this tendency to evil in the souls of men, could be lessened by joining them to a portion of matter, as we all along suppose it might; why was it not brought so low, that without a contrary habit, and consequently without depending on the fidelity of another, every one might have entered upon his own purification and trial?"

The answer is easy. Such a degree of stupefaction as might be necessary for this purpose,

purpose, would perhaps have rendered us altogether incapable of both. The case therefore will stand thus : If Adam is faithful, the purification will be easy to his children, and their trial not dangerous : if he falls, their condition will not be worse than if each had been trusted with his own conduct, and their purification and trial will go on by another method, though with greater difficulty and danger ; what the first Adam had put out of order, will be rectified by the second, and every one will have it in his power to act a right part for himself, without depending on the fidelity of another. A Saviour was provided for mankind ; one who is found worthy to be made the Captain of their salvation ; one of greater dignity than Adam, and, though of his race, uncorrupted by his fall. There was nothing in him to be purified, no original sin, nor actual transgression : he became man for our sakes, not his own, and clothed himself with our infirmities. Such was “ the seed of the woman ” that was to bruise “ the head of the serpent.” Thus we are come to the last part of this inquiry ; and if the perfect innocence ascribed to the Messiah,

Messiah, can be accounted for on the present hypothesis, we may venture to say, it is not contrary to any article of the Christian faith.

Before the creation of Adam, his fall, no doubt, was foreseen as a possible thing, perhaps as probable; and we may well suppose that the plan of our redemption was then formed. One therefore of Adam's race must be absolutely pure, and every way qualified for an hypostatic union with the Deity, that, "in the fulness of time," the divine and human natures might be so joined as to make but one person. Now what hinders from believing, that the purest and best of those angelic spirits who kept their stations, and were of the same hierarchy with the souls of men, was chosen for this purpose, and embodied with the rest of mankind? What hinders from believing, that this pure and spotless soul not only consented, but, from love to his brethren, freely offered to quit the heavenly mansions, to remain in a state of silence until the time in which the Messiah was to appear, and then to act and suffer for the salvation of men, all that the divine wisdom and justice should require



quire\*. And if so, how truly might he say when he came into the world, (Heb. x. 5.) "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, "but a body hast thou prepared me: in  
 "burnt-

\* There are many passages of scripture which would incline one to believe, that the second person of the Trinity had united himself to the human nature before the incarnation in the reign of Augustus. We are told, that God spoke to Adam in the garden, to some of the patriarchs both before and after the flood, to Moses in the burning bush, and on mount Sinai; we are told it, I say, and with circumstances which would seem to imply, that he had conversed with them, and appeared in a bodily shape: whence some have concluded, that the divine and human natures were already joined in the person of the Messiah; and that it was he who conducted his people out of Egypt, and gave the law on Mount Sinai. If I am doubtful about this opinion, it is not because of any difficulty that would arise from it with respect to a pre-existence; it is the same as to that, whether the soul of the Messiah, embodied with the rest of mankind, was so placed as that he should be brought out of the state of silence before the fall, or remain in it until the fulness of time, when he was to live among men, and suffer for them. But I fear it will not be easy to reconcile that way of giving the law, with Acts vii. 53. Gal. iii. 19. and Heb. ii. 2. where the law is said to be given by the ministration of angels; and unless it can be reconciled, I would not assert it. St Jerom indeed, in his comment upon Gal. iii. 19. "The law was ordained by angels in "the hand of a mediator;"—says, that by *mediator* Christ is meant: but he says not that he had then taken upon him the human nature; the contrary is rather to be inferred from his way of explaining it. His words  
 are,

“burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin  
 “thou hast had no pleasure : then said I,  
 “Lo, I come (in the volume of thy book it  
 “is written of me) to do thy will O God !”

Now the fall of Adam could make no impression on such a soul : no tendency to evil was contracted in a former state ; the faculties, the desires, and affections, were all as they ought to be, and needed no particular frame of bodily organs to lessen

are, “*Quod autem ait, Lex ordinata per angelos, hoc vult intelligi, quod in omni Vetere Testamento, ubi angelus primum visus refertur, et postea quasi Deus loquens inducitur, angelus quidem vere ex ministris pluribus quicunque sit visus, sed in illo mediator [Christus] loquatur ; qui dicat, Ego sum Deus Abraham, Deus Isaac, et Deus Jacob. Nec mirum si Deus loquatur in angelis, cum etiam per angelos qui in hominibus sunt loquatur Deus in prophetis ; dicente Zacharia, Et ait angelus qui loquebatur in me ; ac deinceps inferente, Hæc dicit Dominus Omnipotens.*” But if, quitting Jerom’s opinion, we should say that Moses and Aaron were the angels, (for such men are sometimes in scripture so called, and thence Malachy, the last of the prophets, had his name), and that the Messiah spoke to the people by them, or by their mediation, and not so immediately as Jesus Christ did to the Jews, this might be one way of solving the difficulty : and upon that supposition, I think, one might have a more distinct notion of the patriarchal religion than can be got otherwise. After all, it is perhaps as well not to indulge ourselves in such inquiries, unless they could serve a better end than to satisfy curiosity.

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their impetuosity, or to change their bias. Thus by his own innocence the Messiah was effectually secured from the spiritual disorder which to all the rest was an unavoidable consequence of Adam's fall. His body (which, by the passage just quoted, seems to have been all that was prepared for him) would indeed suffer in its constitution like the bodies of other men, and the infirmities of human nature would follow of course : but that can be no objection here ; we know that " he put on " our infirmities, and was made like unto " us in every thing, sin only excepted."

This account of the Messiah, so far as I can judge, will agree in every respect to what is said of him in the scripture ; and one passage I remember, which can hardly be explained another way. He himself says, [John vi. 62.], " What and if ye " shall see the Son of Man ascend up where " he was before ? " Was the divine nature only to be understood here, the *Son of God* had been the properer appellation. Besides, the Son being always inseparable from the Father, and essentially in him, though united to the soul of Jesus Christ, it cannot be said that he ascended where he was before.

before. It seems then to be fairly deducible from this text, that the soul of the Messiah existed in a former state: and as he was truly and really man as well as God, a strong presumption will arise, if not a positive proof, that every human soul pre-existed also. One thing I am sure of, that by this hypothesis a great many texts of scripture will be plain and easy, which being otherwise not very intelligible, are often quoted, some in defence of Arianism, others to support a wretched system by which eternal and arbitrary decrees of election and reprobation are ascribed to God. I shall mention a few of them.

“I have glorified thee on the earth,” says our Saviour, [John xvii. 4. 5.]: “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” A glory, you see, is here spoken of, which Jesus Christ had before the world was, and had not when he made this prayer: shall we then conclude, with the Arians, that because his glory could be interrupted, he is not God

equal and one with the Father? I affirm not that the conclusion is right though a pre-existence should not be admitted; but I think it very clear, that this passage will not furnish even the shadow of an objection against the orthodox opinion concerning the godhead of the Messiah, if we can say, the glory prayed for was that glory which he possessed as a creature before his incarnation, that is, before the creation of Adam. As God he enjoyed without interruption the glory which belongs to God; but as man he prays, that having finished the work which was given him to do, he might be restored to the glory which he had with God before he undertook the redemption of men, or before the world was. This glory was the glory of a creature, and might be, as it actually was, interrupted when he became man. He says likewise, [chap. xvi. 28.] "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father;" yet no inference can be drawn in favour of Arianism, if the soul of the Messiah existed before his incarnation. He was with God, who is the Father of spirits; his soul, I say,



say, was with God, and came from him into the world. Whereas if, denying a pre-existence, we shall own that the divine nature is meant here; how Jesus Christ, in that sense, can be said to leave the Father, and return to him, is not so plain.

It will be enough to have taken notice of these two passages with regard to this article of the Christian faith; for you will easily perceive, that the rest of that kind may be taken from the Arians in the same way: and, to make out the other part of the assertion, will not be a work of labour.

If Jacob in a former state fell but a very little, and Esau a great deal, every body will see why the one was loved, and the other hated. If Jeremiah existed before he was formed in the belly, he would be known; and his fitness might be the reason that he was ordained a prophet unto the nations, before he came forth out of the womb. John Baptist prepared the way for the Messiah, Judas betrayed him: they were prophesied of; and the scripture was fulfilled by both. Was the soul of Judas then created as eminently wicked as John's was

was holy? No; but they had acted on another stage, and their conduct there had made the difference. John was ready to obey his call, and to prepare the way by preaching repentance; Judas was not less ready to betray his master, as soon as the thirty pieces were offered. Thus, to fulfil the scripture, no other decree was necessary but that they should be so disposed of as to live in the days of the Messiah.

More instances might be given, but to no purpose: when others occur, let a pre-existence be kept in view, and, I believe, you will find them easy. You will be able likewise to assign a solid and satisfactory cause for the difference of tempers and dispositions among men with respect to good and evil, even among those who are not chosen to execute the designs of providence in a remarkable way, without having recourse to special decrees, or the too accidental difference of bodily constitutions.

It is, or may be, a common observation, that some are naturally mild; others need to be constantly on their guard against boisterous and almost ungovernable passions: one is benevolent, and it costs him,

him nothing to employ every talent in doing good ; another is quite the contrary, and, when placed in a public station, becomes in the hand of providence a scourge to mankind : in short, some are almost holy from the cradle, while others in their earliest youth discover a violent tendency to evil. Now, whence so great an inequality ; an inequality which is often the immediate cause of happiness in the other world to some, and of misery to others ? Were some of the souls of men created good, others wicked ? No such thing can ever be allowed ; the very thought is shocking. Is all owing to the accidental difference of bodily constitutions ? That were hard indeed ! To be miserable because one chanced to drop into such and such a body, or was thrust into it by almighty power ! Must we then give it up as a thing not to be accounted for ? No : there are two ways. If from our parents we immediately derive our beings, a great variety of tempers, even with respect to good and evil, will be the natural consequence. But the opinion is unphilosophic. I know it is reckoned so, and may nevertheless be true. If, again, we have acted  
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in another state, and acted differently; what wonder if we bring different dispositions here? and this, I own, seems to be the easier way.

I have shewn, at least I think so, that a pre-existence is rational, and not inconsistent with natural or revealed religion: I think too it is a more satisfactory opinion than the other; and many agreeable inferences may be drawn from it, agreeable to well-disposed persons, who might otherwise be led into a doubtfulness concerning some fundamental truths of religion, not knowing how to reconcile them with their ideas of justice. How to account for the present state of things, both in the natural and moral world, gives likewise no small disturbance to some, who cannot be easy unless their reason is satisfied. I dare say, it never will be accounted for, but by one or other of these hypotheses: and whichsoever of them be true, it follows, that the children of Adam might naturally be involved in the unhappy consequences of his fall, and so stand in need of a Mediator and Redeemer, as well as he. We have therefore to consider next, whether it be sufficiently clear, that  
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Jesus Christ is Mediator betwixt God and man, the true Messiah, and Redeemer of mankind; in which case the religion instituted by him must be true, and to doubt unreasonable.

III. OF those who have taken to themselves the name of *free-thinkers*, some deny the existence of a God; the rest only affirm, that Reason is a sufficient guide; that it is given to man as such, and needs no assistance for directing him in his conduct. These make Revelation unnecessary; the first make it impossible.

A little reflection upon the admirable contrivance of the visible world, cannot fail to establish in the mind such a firm belief of the existence of a God, as will not be shaken by the vain arguments of pretenders to Atheism. Nor need we have recourse to metaphysical and abstracted ideas, to convince us of a truth which every object of the many thousands that daily strike our senses, sufficiently shews. What man of common understanding will consider the texture of his own body, or that of the smallest animal, and not say within himself, "This is the work of  
Q "God?"



“God?” There is not a tree, nor herb, nor pile of grass, but (if we may speak so) declares the wisdom of its creator; and affords arguments strong enough to overturn the best imagined systems of those who would set up a blind chance in the place of the Deity; or, instead of Epicurus’s atoms, give us the universe for the author of itself; or a fixed unalterable chain of causes and their effects, like Spinoza. It is not the reasonableness of these, or the like opinions, that has got them followers: we must look for the source of Atheism elsewhere. Men seldom argue against the existence of a God, till their vices have made it their interest there was none; to that, or the disorders of a wild imagination, we owe the several whimsical hypotheses which have been offered to the world concerning the production of things.

To the same causes we may justly ascribe the growth of Deism. To grant there is a God, can do no harm, if he will be satisfied with such worship and adoration as his creatures can find leisure from their more important affairs to bestow upon him; and to acknowledge him to be the  
author

author of all things, is but paying an unexpensive compliment, while every one reserves to himself the privilege of framing such a system of religion and morality as does not straiten him in the pursuit of his pleasure or interest.

But as soon as the existence of a God is owned, the possibility of revelation follows of course; and the advantage of having it, will appear from a very moderate reflection upon the grossness of the Pagan idolatry, in which almost all the earth was sunk for many ages. To say that a right exercise of reason will prevent mistakes in religion, is to appropriate reason (at least the right exercise of it) to the modern Deists: for even the wise-men and philosophers among the ancients, were at a loss where to fix, after having rid themselves of the common opinions; and some of them have fallen into errors as bad as those they were endeavouring to avoid. If the *religion of nature* has been delineated in a more perfect and uniform way by later authors, it is because they have had better helps: and however unwilling some may be to acknowledge that they have taken a guide, they can hardly think of

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putting their books upon the world for originals, while every one has in his hand that book whence the purest and best part of them is drawn ; at least it is only when religion is the subject that they'd expect to be used with so much good-nature \*.

What progress one of a pure heart, unbiassed by passion or interest, could make in searching after the truth by the alone strength of reason, is not easy to be determined ; the necessary qualifications are so rare, it is much if ever the trial has been made ; and the precepts that such a person might give from his discoveries into the nature and will of God, would have weight only with the few, who, by a happy genius and disposition, were willing and capable to follow him step by step in the way to knowledge. The rest of mankind, unable to distinguish betwixt him and the pretenders to truth, would probably fancy themselves unconcerned in the dispute ; as was the case with the precepts,

\* Mr Wollaston, in his *Religion of nature delineated*, towards the end of his book, says, — “ Here I begin to be very sensible how much I want a guide.” — Ordinary readers will believe, that a self-taught philosopher, or (as he phrases it) almost *αὐτοδίδακτος*, must have stopped sooner, or lost his way.

as well as the systems, of the old philosophers : every sect asserting the truth to be on their side, the world was left uncertain where to find it, or if it was to be found. But if things are delivered as immediate revelations from God, by men who declare they are sent by him to teach the world, the inquiry comes to be of a quite different nature ; for if the proofs of their mission are clear, whatever is thus stamped with the divine authority, is infallibly true, and must be received as such.

Now, that there are proofs upon which the mind may and ought to rely, cannot be doubted ; else revelation were to no purpose, and God might act in vain. It were impossible even for God to make known his will to men, so as to make it their duty to obey, if there were not sure and infallible marks for distinguishing betwixt impostors and those who are sent by him. The inward communications of the Holy Spirit in the centre of the soul, do indeed carry their conviction along with them, and need no outward sign : but the conviction reaches no farther than the persons themselves ; and how few are qualified for such an intercourse ! If the world is

to be spoke to, it must be in a language it can understand: the senses must be struck, and the power of God appear, before his voice can be known. Now, if (like the Pharisees) we were to ask a sign, what surer could we think of, or more to be depended on, than prophecies and miracles \*? It cannot be supposed, nay, it is impossible, that God will ever suffer a false

\* The life of Jesus Christ, and his divine doctrine, are internal proofs of the truth of the Christian religion; very strong indeed, and by many thought so convincing, as to render all other proofs unnecessary. To some sincere thinking men it may be so: but we have seen Deists, such Deists as one would not chuse to class in the mob of free-thinkers, speak of the purity of his life and doctrine with great reverence, even with admiration. Besides, he himself, (Matth. xi.), in his answer to the disciples of John, and upon other occasions, appeals to his miracles, and the prophecies, for the proof of his mission. Nor can it be denied, that the apostles, in converting the world, trusted to them, and the power of working miracles in his name, to which we may justly ascribe their success; internal proofs, however strong in their own nature, having but little weight with the generality of mankind. Some, again, fancy the proofs of revelation ought to have been over-bearing. Perhaps they might not be all of one mind were they to condescend upon the proofs that would be so. But can any one not see, that over-bearing proofs would be inconsistent with a state of trial? The appearances are not few of our state being such. Will any one undertake to prove it is not?

religion



religion to be ushered into the world with clear and distinct prophecies, and supported by real miracles. And this impossibility is founded on the nature of God: for the delusion were unavoidable; or, rather, it were a fault not to be deceived. How far the Christian religion can bear this test, is the part of Reason to determine: and the inquiry is not too laborious for the most ordinary understandings: it is but to consider with an attention free of prejudice, the prophecies contained in the Old Testament, and the facts narrated in the New.

In the first, the things which in the history of Jesus Christ appear in the worst light to human reason, such as the manner of his birth, his low and despised life, and ignominious death, are so particularly described in their minutest circumstances, that it is plain it was by these marks principally that the Saviour of the world was to be known; while, at the same time, the dignity of his nature is clearly discovered, lest the mind of man should be shocked with seeing one so mean and contemptible in appearance, equal himself unto God, and in teaching the  
mystery

mystery of the Trinity in Unity, declare himself the second person of it. Of this you may satisfy yourselves, by casting your eye below, where I have set down a few passages, to save you the trouble of looking for them \*; and if it was of any use

\* Micah vi. 2. "But thou Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel: whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

Isaiah ix. 6. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of peace."

Zech. ix. 9. 10. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle-bow shall be cut off; and he shall speak peace unto the Heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth."

— xi. 12. 13. "And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear: so they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it into the potter: a goodly price that I was valued at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord."

Zech.

use to heap up quotations, there is scarce a book of the Old Testament but would furnish some. To point out the Messiah in characters clear enough to prevent all mistakes as to his person, seems to have been the principal design of the prophets under the law. The other things which they

Zech. xiii. 6. " And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, " Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends."

Psal. xxii. 16. 17. 18. " For dogs have compassed me, " the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they " pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my " bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my " garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

— lxx. 21. " They gave me also gall for my meat, " and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."

— xvi. 8. 9. 10. " I have set the Lord always before " me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be " moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory " rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou " wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer " thine holy One to see corruption."

Zech. xii. 10. " And I will pour upon the house of " David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the " spirit of grace and of supplications, and they shall " look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall " mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, " and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born."

The 53d chapter of Isaiah, being a plain and continued prophecy of Jesus Christ, should be read entire.

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foretold, whether concerning the Jews or the Gentiles, served to determine the time of his coming, by distinguishing the events that were to precede it from those that were to follow, as the prophecies of the monarchies, the seventy weeks, the dispersion of the Jews, &c.; or they were such as, by being daily fulfilled in the eyes of all, might give a firm belief and expectation of those which centred on the Messiah, and were to have their completion in him.

The agreement betwixt the prophecies and the gospels is not more remarkable, than the care which has been taken to remove, even from the most scrupulous, all suspicions of fraud in the one or the other. The Jews, who were made the keepers of the prophecies, will not be suspected of corrupting them in favour of him whom they crucified, or of allowing his disciples to impose on the world by a false history of his life, when the discovery must at once have crushed a religion that was daily gaining ground in spite of the most virulent machinations on their part. Thus the enemies of Christianity become supporters of its truth; and the crucifiers of  
Jesus

Jesus Christ contribute no less to prove him the Messiah, than his disciples who wrought miracles in his name, and gave their lives in defence of their doctrine.

But beside what immediately concerned the person of the Messiah, the conversion of the Gentiles from idolatry to the knowledge of the true God, by being promised, was made one of the distinguishing marks of his coming. And though the success of a religion is not alone a proof of its truth, the extraordinary manner in which Christianity made its way into the world, must greatly strengthen the conviction that arises from the prophecies and miracles upon which our belief is founded.

Jesus Christ was born in the low and wretched condition of other children; and the poverty of his mother deprived him even of the common conveniencies. He passed thirty years in a private hidden life: and when he declared himself the Son of God, and offered salvation to those who should believe in him, a few fishermen only became his disciples. The rest of the Jews being full of the expectation of a glorious triumphing Messiah, as



he is described at his second coming, were so far from receiving him, though they saw his miracles, that they arraigned him as a malefactor and blasphemer; and he suffered the ignominious death appointed for the worst of criminals \*. He had foretold this to his disciples; and that in executing the commission which he gave them, "to go and teach all nations," they were to expect the same treatment: yet they were not discouraged: A few illiterate men undertake the conversion of mankind, and preach a crucified God, and purity of manners, to a world sunk in philosophy and luxury; having nothing better to promise their proselytes in this life than persecution and contempt.

When they began to publish the doctrines they had received from their master, they met with an universal opposition. The spectacles of Christians led to martyrdom by their frequency became fami-

\* The manner in which the Messiah was to be put to death is often pointed at by the prophets, and the brazen serpent was a type of it; yet that punishment was not in use amongst the Jews: nor could it have been inflicted without the accomplishment of another prophecy, that in the days of the Messiah they were to be under a foreign yoke.

liar, and horrid executions were beheld with as little concern as the combats of gladiators. A belief that the most exquisite torments were not equal to the crimes of those who suffered, extinguished even the common compassion that nature feels for the misery of ordinary criminals. And though that courage which gives a willingness to die, when life cannot be preserved with purity, was of all the virtues most admired by the Romans, and that it was it which having completed the characters of Cato, Brutus, and a few more, secured to them a higher place in the opinion of their countrymen than their other actions, however noble, could have intitled them to; yet this greatness of mind, this heroic virtue, appeared in persons of all ages, and of both sexes, among the Christians, attended with greater firmness and tranquillity than Cato, Brutus, or any other Roman, could ever boast of; this virtue, I say, of which the Romans gloried in having produced a few examples, was seen now in multitudes, without procuring them a better character than of being obstinate in wickedness. Nevertheless the number of Christians increased daily;

daily; and experience made it evident that they were not to be shaken in the profession of their faith. Nor was it only the ignorant and unlearned that embraced the new religion; it soon pierced into the schools of the philosophers, and the imaginary systems of human reason yielded to the simplicity of the gospel.

And now, seeing the truth of our religion appears from the most solid and indubitable proofs, shall our faith waver because of the trifling objections which have been started by some who boast of reason, virtue, and good-will, to their fellow-creatures, while they are fighting against God, and endeavouring to make ineffectual the methods which he has chosen to bring about the salvation of men? or shall we answer once for all, “The things  
“which you ridicule we believe to be  
“true, we believe on no less authority  
“than that of God. Our reason is fully  
“satisfied; it has told us already, that it  
“is God who speaks, and we are resolved  
“to hear with humility and silence.  
“Trouble us no more then with vain arguments: we feel our corruption, and  
“will endeavour to use the means appointed

“pointed by Infinite Wisdom for getting  
“free of it?” This surely is the easiest  
way, and the most rational; but as every  
one has not firmness enough for it, I  
shall, after shewing you the ground of  
these objections, state them as fairly as I  
can, such at least as seem to be most for-  
midable: and to answer them shall be the  
subject of the next section.

They inform us, That God is not an ar-  
bitrary being: That he always acts accor-  
ding to reason, and so cannot repent:  
That he receives no advantage from his  
creatures, nor expected any, having made  
them solely for their own good: That, as  
he requires nothing which does not pro-  
mote this end, his commands are founded  
on reason and the nature of things, and  
are made known to all at all times and  
places: That partiality, cruelty, revenge,  
anger, malice, envy, have no place in  
him, nor any thing that argues imperfec-  
tion: That he is constant and uniform in  
all his ways, and what is agreeable to his  
will now, was, and will be, always so.

From this representation of the divine  
nature it is inferred,

That “The Jewish ceremonies being  
“burdensome

“burdensome and trifling, and their sacrifices unfit expiations for sin, the law by which they are commanded is not the law of God.”

That “The orders given to the Israelites for extirpating the nations of Canaan being cruel, and the method of executing them barbarous; these orders are not from God, nor their obedience approved.”

That “The God of the Jews being sometimes angry and revengeful, sometimes partial, then inconstant and repenting, he is not the true God.”

That “The God who hardened Pharaoh’s heart, cannot be the God who says, *As I live I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.*”

That “To believe there is but one God, yet three distinct persons in the Deity, is to believe a contradiction.”

That “There being no analogy betwixt sacrifice and sin, the sufferings of one cannot satisfy justice for the sins of another; consequently the sufferings of Jesus Christ are not expiatory, nor he to be accounted the Saviour of men.”

That “His institutions, though less burdensome



“burdensome than the ceremonies under  
“the law, are improper, as having no  
“connection with the ends proposed. Can  
“outward washing, for instance, operate  
“the inward purification of the heart? or  
“eating and drinking communicate grace  
“to the soul?”

And lastly, (which indeed is saying all at once), That “There never was, or can  
“be, any revelation; because God being  
“impartial and just, will not do more for  
“some nations, and in some ages of the  
“world, than he has done for all. Thus  
“the light of reason being alone univer-  
“sal, must be sufficient, and alone true.”

These, I think, make the bulk of their objections; and, did I know any stronger, I would mention them, being persuaded that the truth will always be evident to the unbiaſſed and sincere. We shall consider them in the same order, after a few reflections on the nature of God, and what may be reasonably expected from such a being.

S E C T.

## S E C T. IV.

*Solution of the difficulties supposed to lie against revealed religion, from,*

1. *The ceremonies and sacrifices appointed by the law of Moses; the orders for extirpating the nations of Canaan; the characters ascribed to God in the Old Testament; the hardening of Pharaoh's heart.*
2. *The doctrine of the Trinity; the atonement for sin by the sufferings of Jesus Christ; the Christian sacraments.*
3. *The difference betwixt the lights of reason and revelation, the first being universal, the other confined to certain times and nations.*

I. **W**HEN it is said, that God is not an arbitrary being, surely it cannot be meant that he is not free to act as he pleases; but only, that being infinitely perfect, he never wills but that which is right. Thus we affirm, that God cannot act or will so and so, not because we think him under any restraint, but because we know that certain things and ways

ways of acting or willing are inconsistent with goodness, justice, wisdom, or some other of the divine attributes. We observe, on the contrary, other things, and other ways of acting or willing, not only not inconsistent with goodness, justice, &c. but even so absolutely fit and right, that not to will and act in that manner would infer imperfection; we therefore affirm, that God wills this or that, and acts in such or such a way. And this is the whole foundation of what is called *the religion of nature*.

Suppose now every one was to make out for himself this religion, it will be owned, I reckon, that some would have it more complete than others, as having more distinct conceptions of the Deity, and a clearer judgement: and as it is not pretended, that the reason of any one man, or of all men together, is able to comprehend fully the divine nature, or to connect in one chain all the ends of providence, and the properest means for effectuating them; it follows, that the religion of nature must ever remain imperfect: and if a superior being should condescend to instruct us, this new religion would in-

fallibly be more perfect, as being founded on a deeper knowledge than human understanding can reach; and to reject it, because not the product of our own brain, would shew more of arrogance than of wisdom.

Again, if one of a shallow understanding should fall to work with framing a religion for himself, and resolve to take no assistance, because he is one of those creatures who are endued with reason, and every one's reason, he is told, ought to be his guide; what a horrid medley, do you think, would be the fruit of this project! how contemptible in the eyes of other men! Yet were the most refined systems divested of all that has been picked from revelation, and reviewed by beings of a higher order, living in a clearer light, it is more than possible they would appear as blundering and inconsistent: yea, could the trial be made, perhaps even the authors would be ashamed of such patchwork; but we learn so insensibly from education and books, that it is hard to distinguish the natural productions of reason.

This being plainly the case, when man  
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is considered as having no light but his own, if God should think fit to make discoveries, and to institute a more perfect religion, many new things must enter into it. The reason of some would immediately appear, and these be looked on by degrees as part of the religion of nature; while the rest, deriving their fitness from things less obvious, and sometimes from things incomprehensible, would be rejected as trifling, or contrary to reason, by all who suffer themselves to be influenced by pride, or give way to a natural reluctance to submit to any yoke, even though imposed by God. And here we shall find the true source of all possible objections against revealed religion: those mentioned before will serve for a proof.

To begin then with the Jewish ceremonies: May they not have been well adapted to the genius of that nation, to keep them in continual remembrance of God, and of the great things he had done for them? May they not likewise have been very proper to represent yet greater things to be done for all mankind? and may there not have been other reasons for them, unknown to us? At this rate we shall pronounce



nounce too hastily, if we call them *trifling* : and to obey God, is not burdensome to the well-disposed.

Upon the supposition that God was to send Jesus Christ to redeem mankind from the bondage of sin, it would seem highly reasonable that preceding revelations should have respect to this great event ; and that a people should be separated from all the nations of the earth, without which the prophecies could not have been preserved entire, and unmixed with fable ; nor the Messiah known to be the Son of David, of Judah, and of Abraham. And if certain practices were appointed, typifying or representing the design and method of redemption, and spiritual and temporal benefits annexed to the observation of them, Reason sure could find no fault ; for this would evidently tend to keep up the expectation of the Messiah, to distinguish the true one from others, and to confirm the belief that salvation was to be obtained by his merit.

Now, let the ceremonies, the sacrifices, and the whole temple-worship, be considered in this view ; and that which was made the ground of an objection against the Jewish law,

law, will be a proof that it is from God. No body doubts that the brazen serpent was a type of Jesus Christ; and the scape-goat sent into the wilderness, after the sins of the people were laid upon him, was plainly another. I have picked out these two instances, because they need no explanation; whoever takes the trouble to compare the law and the gospel, will discover more. The sacrifices were also types of the great sacrifice offered upon the cross; and thus the blood of beasts, though of itself incapable to expiate sin, might have a value in the sight of God, when shed by his appointment to represent that blood, which, in the scripture, (as our translations render it), is called *the blood of the covenant*.

The orders for extirpating the nations of Canaan, which make the next objection, are entirely of a piece with the ordinary way of providence. It is appointed for men once to die: God has reserved to himself the manner of executing the sentence; and no body that I know of was ever bold enough to call him on that account either cruel or unjust. Now, if a nation is to be cut off, what cruelty is there, what injustice,

justice, whether it be done by sword, pestilence, or famine? or, what odds does it make to each particular person, to die by a fever, or the hand of an enemy? The wars of the Israelites are not the only wars in which multitudes have been swept away; there have been terrible devastations on the earth since the days of Joshua; and though the orders be not so formal, it is God that strikes by the hand of every conqueror. Great difference, however, is to be made betwixt those who blindly execute judgements, not from regard to the will of God, but to satisfy their own ambition or cruelty, and others who have precise orders for every part of their conduct. The actions of the first are crimes, and deserve punishment; whereas submissive obedience is one of the highest virtues, and may be practised with the dispositions of Abraham when he was going to sacrifice his son Isaac, or of an angel sent to chastise a guilty land. It is true, the general character of the Israelites will not allow us to judge so favourably of them; it is not probable that their obedience was always disinterested; covetousness, cruelty, and other bad dispositions, may have  
made

made it easy, and these were not approved; nor does the scripture say it. But how much soever an action may lose of its value by the mixture of bad motives, obedience is still a duty. There is then nothing to blame in their conduct as to this point: and if a reason is wanted on the part of God for orders so peremptory, and in appearance severe, let it be considered, that to see a whole people devoted to destruction because of their sins, and to be the instruments of executing the decree, was like to make a stronger impression on the Israelites, and more effectually to prevent their falling into the same abominations, than if it had been done by another way. Besides, we know not but this may have been the very best thing that could have happened even to the Canaanites: for though they did not, like Nineveh, so repent as to have the sentence reversed, it is uncertain how far the temporal punishments inflicted on them may have bettered their state with respect to another life.

In dealing with men God accommodates himself to their weakness, using different methods, because they are of different tempers. Some are gained by love,

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some by promises, others by fear and chastisement. Even the same persons are not always equally affected with the same things : Generous hearts are often touched with the prospect of rewards and punishments ; and there may be intervals in which the most selfish perceive a beauty in holiness. This variety of tempers, and the inconstancy which is natural to all, obliges God (if the expression is allowable) to inflict heavy chastisements, as he did on the Canaanites, and in the ordinary course of providence does daily on nations and particular persons ; and also to give such representations of himself as might convince the world, that, in this life or another, he will as regularly punish the wicked, as reward the good.

As these obvious reflections, if allowed their full weight, will shew, that the orders for cutting off the Canaanites are not inconsistent with the truest notions of God, they will serve likewise to reconcile us with other passages of scripture, in which he is represented in characters that belong only to men. It were absurd indeed to believe that God is angry, revengeful, partial, inconstant, repenting, as we are, or that  
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he has passions like us ; but it may be true, that certain things move him to act as if he felt these inward commotions ; and if so, the springs of action in the Deity are properly enough represented by them. Nay, if they are to be represented at all, it must be in such a way. And if there was not some analogy of this kind, it were impossible to give us any rule whereby to judge of the conduct of God towards his creatures ; for we cannot form ideas but from what we feel in ourselves and observe in others. It is true our ideas must at this rate be imperfect when applied to beings with whose natures we are not fully acquainted ; yet they are proportioned to our state : and even our words, which are more imperfect, answer all our purposes ; nor do we scruple to make use of metaphorical expressions, being sure the meaning will be understood if they are not very ill chosen. I know not then what should hinder us from using metaphorical ideas too ; and it is certain that both are common in other books, as well as in the scripture.

When we say, the hand, the eye, the ear, the heart, of God, no body quarrels

it, or fancies that God is supposed to have bodily parts: it is always the idea of infinite power, knowledge, or goodness, that is conveyed. Now, why may not the anger, the revenge, the hatred, the repentance of God, convey such ideas as we are able to form of the sensations in the Deity, by which he is determined to act as men do when under the influence of these passions? and may we not strip these ideas of all imperfection, and of every thing peculiar to men, as we do the first? When we read that "God stretched out his arm to" "avenge himself of his enemies," the first part of the expression is not understood literally, nor is it ever suspected that the writer meant it so: we ought then to do the same justice as to the last part of it, the motive agreeing as ill with the nature of God, as the manner in which he is said to prepare himself for action. Thus the sense will be, that God resolved to exert his power and strength in a way that would produce the same effects, as if he had been moved by the desire of revenge; which, on that account, is made use of to represent to us the sensation that determined him to act in that manner.

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By this and other representations of the same kind, we can judge what treatment we are to expect from God, when our conduct toward him is such as, among men, would procure us the name of friends or enemies, though in our present state, it is perhaps impossible even for revelation to make us comprehend so much of his nature as to let us know how he is affected by it. These metaphorical expressions and ideas are therefore extremely useful; and the truth is, we know so very little of the nature of God, that when we speak or think of him, we are for the most part obliged to do it in that way. This, however, will occasion no inconveniency if it is not our own fault; for as we need no other instructor than reason, to know that God is affected by the good or bad conduct of his creatures, the same reason will tell us, that it must be in such a manner as implies no imperfection.

Whatever some may think of the scripture-style, and the sentiments that run through these sacred books, both have been admired by the truest critics, and inimitable beauties taken notice of, which even barbarous translations have not been able

able to deface. But, without the help of criticism, every reader, who has good sense, a sincere heart, and a willingness to bestow as much attention as the thing deserves, will discover, that the whole is designed for the good of men; and that the characters ascribed to God, and the different parts he is said to act, are not unworthy of him, nor inconsistent with one another. This, I hope, is in a good measure proved by the observations already made, and it will be yet clearer by those which the next objection will naturally lead us to.

After Moses had received his commission to deliver the Israelites, the Lord said unto him, [Exod. iv. 21.], "When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart that he shall not let the people go:" and in the 33d chapter of Ezekiel, the prophet is ordered to speak unto the house of Israel, and to say unto them, [ver. 11.], "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." Now the  
desire

desire that every sinner should repent being thought inconsistent with the intention to harden Pharaoh's heart, it is alleged, that in the scripture God is introduced as contradicting himself. The passage in Ezekiel needs no explanation; it is clear and strong, and agrees perfectly with the infinite goodness which we justly ascribe to God: we must see then if that in Exodus will not admit of another sense than the objectors give it.

In ver. 3. 4. 5. of chap. vii. we have the reason for hardening Pharaoh's heart; and it is, that God might shew signs and wonders in order to convince the Egyptians that he is the Lord; which entirely agrees with the passage in Ezekiel, the knowledge of God being of all things the most likely to make the wicked turn from his way. If then there is any inconsistency, it must be with respect to Pharaoh: and we shall judge of it best, after considering the character of that king.

The heavy oppression under which the Israelites groaned, particularly the horrid command to slay their male children, shews plainly enough that the Egyptian kings, about this time, were far from deserving



serving the name of good princes. A sort of reason indeed there was for treating them in this manner, as we see in the first chapter of Exodus ; but cruelty and injustice are not excused before God by reasons of state : and though the Pharaoh to whom Moses was sent, did but continue what his predecessors had begun, it is evident that his heart was no better than theirs ; for he that continues a severe usage, discovers the same uncompassionate temper, the same disregard of religion and virtue, as if he had begun it. Now this being the character of Pharaoh, what was to be expected from him ? Perhaps, had he been left to himself, he had let the people go, not from a deference to the will of God, but for fear of the plagues which were threatened. Thus he had remained in the same bad state, and the opportunity had been lost of making it known by signs and wonders that God is the Lord. Whereas by so hardening his heart as to render him insensible of the danger to which he was exposing himself, both he and the Egyptians may have acquired, with the knowledge of God, better dispositions, and may have died in the Red sea  
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in such a state as to give them cause to admire the goodness of God, and to bless him during all eternity: for we know that even the latest repentance is not without a value.

I have only said, that the hardening of Pharaoh's heart may have had this effect, carrying it no farther than a possibility; but if the circumstances are attended to, it will appear even more than probable. Many miracles were seen by the Egyptians before the children of Israel were brought to the Red sea; miracles that would not let them stand as idle and unconcerned spectators. They saw the God of Israel triumphing over nature; and themselves, as it were, depending on the breath of Moses and Aaron. They saw the littleness of human power and grandeur, and the folly of contending with God. The most contemptible insects are made too strong for the proud, the mighty Pharaoh: He is forced to bow before the servants of the Lord, and to expect his deliverance from their intercession: The plague is removed; he returns to his former temper: His own servants ask him if he does not know that the land is already destroyed; he is then

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willing to bargain with God : The offer is not accepted ; new plagues follow ; and he continues obstinate notwithstanding the desolation of his people. At last, God finites the first-born in all the land of Egypt : The consternation is general ; Pharaoh yields ; the Egyptians hasten the departure of the children of Israel : The king's mind changes ; he resolves to pursue ; makes ready his chariots, and takes his people with him.

Whatever the servants and flatterers of Pharaoh may have said of this resolution, it must have been looked on by all as the height of madness ; at least there is reason to think so, if we may judge of the Egyptians as of other men. To give open defiance to that God who had so lately manifested his power, would chill the heart of the stoutest warrior, and give dismal forebodings of the event. These reflections however did not hinder them from following the king ; the danger of disobeying him was immediate, and they knew not yet all the consequences of disobeying God. They overtake the Israelites at the Red sea, who march forward after Moses had divided the waters by stretching out his hand,

hand. Such is the hurry of a pursuit, that it was some time ere the Egyptians observed the miracle ; but when they found their chariots driving heavily, they began to see it with all the terrors of approaching death. The first thought was to fly ; but it was too late : “ Let us flee,” say they, “ from the face of Israel ; for the Lord fighteth for them, against the Egyptians.”

It is only by conjectures that we can now follow them in the few moments they have to live ; but these conjectures will have a solid foundation, if they are made from what we know of human nature. Let any one place himself in their circumstances ; let him call to mind all that passed in Egypt, from the turning the waters into blood, unto the dividing of the Red sea, and endeavour to make the impression as lively as if he had seen it with his own eyes : let him then observe what kind of sentiments he has with respect to the God of Israel ; let him try if he can doubt his intention or power to save a people he had already taken out of bondage by so many miracles : let him next consider himself as joining in pursuit of this people, and consequently

frequently fighting against that God whom in his heart he acknowledges to be almighty. After such reflections as will naturally arise from this situation, let him look upon the host of Pharaoh flying from the face of Israel, sensible of their own folly in having provoked the Lord, and on the point of being swallowed up by the waters which they see returning upon them: let him do this, I say, and tell us whether he does not feel a tendency to humble himself before this almighty being; and let him judge by his own disposition of the manner in which the Egyptians employed the little time that was given them for repentance. Even Pharaoh need not be given up as lost; for though he was blinded, or, if you please, hardened, so as not to see his temporal interest in such time as to prevent the terrible destruction of which his obstinacy was the immediate cause, it does not follow, that he was made incapable to repent.

Now as this explanation is natural, and agrees with the notions we ought to have of God, I know not what should hinder us from believing it true. And as we are ignorant of ancient history, it is uncertain



tain what advantageous impressions so remarkable a judgement may have made on the surviving Egyptians. But whatever be in that, we see enough to be satisfied, that the hardening of Pharaoh's heart might not only be consistent with the passage in Ezekiel, but even a consequence of the desire, "that the wicked turn from his way, and live."

It is very true, that these are not the only places in scripture which appear inconsistent, but as they are commonly picked out for the most obvious, and yet so easily reconciled, of the rest which seem to disagree, we may with reason affirm, that they are insufficiently examined, or not understood; and in all such cases we shall ever be preserved both from doubtfulness and error, by holding fast to that which is plain, and waiting to be enlightened as to other things, until we arrive at a higher state, in which our faculties will be so enlarged as to comprehend more distinctly the ways of God.

We shall now go on to the remaining objections, three of which are more directly levelled against the Christian religion, as attacking the positive institutions of its founder,

founder, and two most essential articles of our faith.

II. THE petulance of human reason, or rather the pride of man, appears no where so much as in objecting against revelation because of the discoveries that have been made concerning the nature of God, as if we could look into the inmost recesses of the Deity, and tell what is or is not there; whereas upon every occasion we are forced to acknowledge our insufficiency, and that the divine nature is infinitely above the conceptions of men: and most certainly we do not understand our present situation; else, of the things which God has been pleased to reveal, we would not be surpris'd to find some dark, and others quite incomprehensible. Thus when Christianity teaches, that in God there is a triple distinction, expressed by the word *persons*, making one eternal nature, simple and indivisible, there is no cause to infer, that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity contradicts itself, because the distinction here understood agrees not with any known or conceivable mode of existence. It is strange if people are not sensible, that they have

have not so clear ideas of the infinite being as to be able to deny, that the unity of the divine nature may subsist with a real but incomprehensible distinction of persons.

Of this doctrine we find so many traces in antiquity, that it seems to have been revealed to the first man, and by Christianity only delivered from the false glosses put upon it at different times; every philosopher thinking himself at liberty to explain it in such a way as best suited his own ideas. Some, in distinguishing the persons, destroyed the unity of the godhead, and fell into Tritheism; others, to preserve the unity, sunk the distinction of persons into a triplicity of attributes: thus men came to dispute about the nature of God, and the purity of the first doctrine was lost in philosophic reasonings. Christians ought to beware of falling into the same error; their faith stands on a more solid basis, and when the divine authority is clear, there is no place for reasoning. Let us believe and adore, and in contemplating the infinite being, enter as much as possible into our own nothingness! and this, I am very sure, is the way  
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that reason points out, when it is not darkened by pride.

If it be owned that the divine nature is incomprehensible, (and who does not own it?), it must be absurd to object against revelation, because it discovers something of God which we do not comprehend. It may be thought, however, that such discoveries are useless; and the shadow of an objection will arise, since God does nothing in vain. I call it the shadow of an objection, for it vanishes in a moment. The mystery of the Trinity must be revealed, else it could not be known that the Saviour of the world is the second person in the Deity. It is true the method of redemption is no less objected against than the doctrine of the Trinity; to believe the one is called believing a contradiction, and the other is looked upon as what cannot be true, because no body has yet been able to assign a reason why God might not have saved mankind on other terms, or why the sufferings of one should be accepted of for the sins of another.

I have already shewn, that the merits of Jesus Christ are chosen by infinite wisdom to satisfy justice for the sins of men; but  
whether

whether God might not have found another way, is an inquiry I shall never make. As little shall I endeavour to make out an analogy betwixt sacrifice and sin, in order to prove that the sufferings of Jesus Christ are expiatory. If the free-thinkers can prove the impossibility of this article of our faith, they do a great deal; but till then they should not object against revelation on account of it; and to make the proof clear, they ought to begin with convincing us, that they understand perfectly the nature of justice, and all the different kinds of satisfaction it can possibly require or admit. Without this, to object is really no more than beating the air; since whatever proves the truth of the Christian religion, will consequential-ly prove the atonement for sin by Jesus Christ, which is so essential a part of it, that the one cannot be true without the other. Thus we conclude with reason, that there is such analogy betwixt sacrifice and sin, that the sufferings of one may satisfy justice for the sins of another, because the Christian religion, which we know to be true, teaches, that the suffer-



ings of Jesus Christ are expiatory, and he the Saviour of men.

Here we have a solid foundation for our faith. We know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, by being made one with the second person of the Trinity : we know that he suffered for men, and reconciled them to the Father ; and that, in consequence of this reconciliation, they are by the Holy Spirit enabled to do that which is right, and so purified from the corruption of sin, as to be again objects of the divine complacency, and capable to find their happiness in communications with God, designed for them from the beginning, to which they will be admitted in another life. And though we do not affirm, that men could not have been otherwise restored to favour, we see in the method of redemption such a fitness for attaining the end proposed by it, that, setting aside the authority of revelation, which commands our belief, reason must own it is not unworthy of infinite wisdom. Not that it can discover by its own light, that mankind was to be redeemed in this way : no ! such condescension on the part of God was not to be looked for till

till he himself had made it known; but being once revealed, it is not too hard for reason to perceive, that no method we can think of, had been so proper.

Had sin made no change in the heart of man, there needed no more but pardon and reconciliation to qualify him again for happiness: his dispositions being the same, as soon as he was re-admitted to the enjoyment of God, he must have had the same delightful sensations as before the fall. But if the frame of his mind was so altered, that he perceived no beauty in infinite perfection, or perceived it not in such a way as to excite his love, the most intimate communication with God could not make him happy. I will not stop here to prove the truth of this assertion, and that such was man's case after the fall, reserving it to another place\*; and I may have occasion oftener than once to mention both; at present, therefore, I shall go on to make out the inference which I have in view.

The happiness of man thus depending

\* See sect. i. 2. part second; and the two first paragraphs of sect. ii. 2. of that part.

on his love to God, without which the divine communications would be tasteless, if not disagreeable, it follows, that God having designed to restore him to the happy state in which he was created, to satisfy justice, is not the sole end of the redemption; since, after the guilt of sin is expiated, man will continue miserable if he does not love. Such a redemption, therefore, as, in procuring his pardon, is most likely to warm his heart into love, would be most advantageous to man; and, on that account, most worthy of God, as best answering the end proposed by infinite goodness. Now, it is absolutely undeniable, that, in our present state, the sentiments of love arising from gratitude, are by much the strongest. We may even affirm, that of those who have attained to the purity of love, a very few being excepted, all have begun here; nor do I know but it may suffer a dispute, whether in the beginning of the spiritual life we can have any other. Our ideas of perfection are naturally so indistinct and obscure, and our sense of true beauty so impaired since the fall, that we are but little affected with contemplating the infinite excellencies which

which are in God: and whatever sensations, threats, and promises, may awaken, they are very improperly called sentiments of love, being only hopes and fears centred upon ourselves.

Existence is a benefit received from God by creation, and will be an eternal source of gratitude to intelligent beings: but bare existence is not such an advantage, as that one would chuse to exist miserably, rather than not exist at all. It is true, God having so made his creatures, that it is their own fault if they are not happy, whatever state they may bring themselves into, their gratitude ought to continue; but as an inability to do or think as they ought, is the very essence of that corruption which follows upon sin, a fallen creature under the weight of misery which a separation from God necessarily occasions, would, instead of thanking him for its existence, willingly throw it back upon his hand: wherefore, if help is not given, or some prospect of relief, a grateful sense of that which it knows to be the foundation of its misery, is not to be expected; for gratitude is a sensation founded upon self-love. It has, however, something which  
partakes

partakes of disinterestedness \*; and being thus made up of two different principles, is a medium betwixt them, perhaps the only one, or a bridge, by which it is possible to pass from the one to the other. That method, then, of redemption which is best adapted to raise our gratitude to the very highest pitch it can possibly be stretched to, will be the most proper. And if we are so deeply sunk in corruption, that the strongest sentiments of gratitude are needful to draw us out of it,

\* See the first note sect. ii. 3. part second. All the strength of this argument will not appear to those who confine the time of purification to this life. Our sensations are languid in respect of what they will be; our ideas indistinct and vague. To this sensation or sentiment (languid as it is) which we express by the word *gratitude*, God often applies in the most solemn manner: "What could I have done for my vineyard that I have not done?—Can a woman forget her sucking child?" "A woman may forget her sucking child, but I will not forget you,"—&c.; and who can say that there may not be a time,—some state, or some point of our future existence, in which this endearing conduct on the part of God will be seen in a clear light, and strike—perhaps with an overbearing force? Here, I think, we ought to stop. The ground, nature, and efficacy, of the sacrifice upon the cross, is far above our comprehension; and, in its root, perhaps above the comprehension of all created beings: "Which things the angels desire to look into," 1 Pet. i. 12.

and



and to make us not only bear up under, but even consent to the terrible sufferings which are inseparable from the purifications we must go through, the conclusion will be yet stronger: it will follow, that as there is not a way by which men could be put under so great obligations, or redeemed with so many testimonies of love, every other method must have been ineffectual, and the forgiveness of sin an useless favour, if obtained by other means than the death and sufferings of Jesus Christ. As often therefore as people argue against revelation on account of this article of faith, something else than reason must be at the bottom, unless the union betwixt the divine nature and the human, as it is taught by the Christian doctrine, were impossible; and he must be a free-thinker indeed, who in this case will set bounds to almighty power.

What has been said of gratitude, will go a great length in answering the next objection. It is alledged, that the Christian sacraments are improper, as having no connection with the end proposed by them. But if gratitude is so necessary, sure it cannot be thought improper to put us in mind  
of

of that benefit which alone can raise it to a sufficient height; and this plainly is the end of the sacrament of the last supper: "Do this in remembrance of me," says our Saviour: and St Paul adds, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." It is true we have in the gospels an historical account of the death and sufferings of Jesus Christ, which will always keep up a remembrance of them; but this comes infinitely short of a solemn representation of that extraordinary sacrifice; and few are such strangers to human nature, as not to perceive the difference. Then, to make the impression as deep as possible, and to force us upon examining ourselves, terrible things are threatened to those who partake unworthily in this mystical commemoration, while others are invited to it, and encouraged to hope for spiritual blessings and new supplies of grace. Thus a connection appears, even in a natural or rational way, betwixt the institution and the end proposed; for it cannot be doubted that God may supernaturally convey his grace through any channel or by any mean, and so annex spiritual

spiritual blessings to the performance of certain outward actions, that the one shall as regularly follow upon the other, as heat upon coming near a fire.

But, say the free-thinkers, "As God "is not an arbitrary being, he always acts "according to reason, and the nature of "things." Be it so; and I suppose they will find, that if the voluntary sacrifice which Jesus Christ made of himself upon the cross for the sins of men, was to be commemorated, it might be done as well by eating and drinking the sacramental bread and wine, as by any other action: and this being once appointed, the annexing spiritual blessings is no more than reason, and the design of the institution, requires. Nay, farther, the easier an action is, it is the more proper for being a channel to communicate grace in a supernatural way. When a thing is performed with difficulty, we always fancy a sort of merit; and the divine communications will never flow in a channel which pride has made impure: it is therefore acting according to reason, and the nature of things, when God chuses such means of

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communication as are least in danger of being spoilt.

Now, as this way of arguing will hold with respect to every divine institution whatsoever; if there be any strength in it, (and I cannot think but there is), it will be easy to perceive, that the outward washing with water in baptism, may have supernatural effects towards the inward purification of the heart; and that the mean for conveying them is extremely proper to keep down our pride; the state of the soul corrupted by sin, being in this sacrament represented under the disagreeable idea of a polluted body. — Besides, we are here solemnly put in mind, that “to be clothed with the new man in Christ Jesus,” we must die to sin, and even pass through a state which bears some analogy to that of the body while it lies putrefying in the grave. For it is well known, that immersion in baptism (and such was the ancient way) has been always looked upon as a figure of the mystical death of the soul, and its rising again to “newness of life.”

They who are not pleased with so easy ways of acquiring grace, and despise on that account the Christian sacraments,  
may

may read in 2 Kings v. what is told of Naaman the leper. He stood at the door of the house of Elisha, expecting to be cured in a pompous manner; but received only a message: "Go," says the servant of the prophet, "and wash in Jordan seven times, and thou shalt be clean. But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, he will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers in Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them and be clean? So he turned, and went away in a rage. And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash and be clean? Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."



III. IT remains now to answer the last objection, or to shew, that an impartial and just God may do, in some ages of the world, and for some nations, what he has not done for all; and that the light of reason may be alone universal, without being always sufficient, and alone true. I shall begin with the last part of the objection, and endeavour to prove, that the light of reason is not always sufficient, and therefore in many cases not true; and then consider how far the conduct of God, as made known by revelation, will agree to the character of an impartial and just being.

It will be granted, I suppose, that the true idea of an intelligent creature is that of a being destined for the enjoyment of God, and consequently endued with such faculties or powers as will render it capable of an immediate intercourse with him. If any there be who think otherwise of man, they scarce deserve to be argued with, and it is no great matter whether they believe revelation, or not: mean time, as they must acknowledge it to be a possible case, its being asserted by revelation will furnish no argument against the truth of it;

it; and whatever system hangs well enough together on this supposition, may be true for any thing they know to the contrary.

I say then, man being a creature destined for the enjoyment of God, he must be endued with some faculty whereby he may have immediate intercourse with him; but reason can carry us no farther than the contemplation of the divine perfections, which is very different from enjoyment; therefore reason is not this faculty, or it is some how or other rendered unfit to answer the purpose it was given for; either of which proves its insufficiency, since a more intimate communication with God, would give a fuller and more distinct knowledge of his will.

But, say they, "Man having no other light, that of reason, how imperfect soever in its own nature, must be sufficient; for God requires no more than that we act according to our knowledge." Now let it only be denied, that man has no other light, and the conclusion comes to nothing. And if it can be proved that God has at any time given a superior light, as often as it shines, that of reason must

must be owned imperfect, not only in its own nature, but even with respect to man; and consequently in all such cases insufficient.

But to cut off at once all hopes of proving that there is, or ever will be, a light superior to reason, arguments are taken from the justice and impartiality of God; and revelation must be looked upon as useless, yea impossible, because it has not been equally clear at all times, and to all men. Thus we are come to that part of the objection in which the strength of it lies; and a late author, not the meanest of his side, seems to have trusted his cause upon it \*: yet, if I am not mistaken, it will entirely fall to pieces, and revelation stand upon the same solid foundation it did before, in case it can be shewn, that nothing is asserted by it with respect to the divine conduct, that will not agree to the character of an impartial and just being.

We see by the history of Moses, that from the creation to the fall man had frequent communication with God; and as soon as by his own fault he was become unfit for so familiar an intercourse, the

\* Christianity as old as the creation, by Tindal.

design and method of restoring him to his former happy state was revealed, in a way indeed that to us appears obscure, but may have been very intelligible to Adam; who cannot be supposed to conceal from his children, or not fully to explain what it so much concerned them to know, as being not only the best support under the penitence enjoined, and the laborious manner in which all were to pass their lives, but also the strongest incitement to gratitude, and consequently to love. And to preserve the remembrance of this gracious promise, which, by one who had tasted the sweets of a paradisiacal life, must have been looked on as the only ray of comfort in the deplorable state of being as it were banished from the presence of God; I say, to preserve the remembrance of it, sacrifices and offerings are appointed, and recommended by Adam to his posterity, as the most exact representation of the great sacrifice and offering which was to be made in the fulness of time: and a faithful obedience to this commandment could not fail of being acceptable, as expressing a lively hope, and a humble dependence on the promises of God. Thus we find  
Cain

Cain and Abel, the one sacrificing, the other offering the fruits of the ground, and can therefore place the beginning of revealed religion as early as could be wished. If no respect was had to the offering of Cain, it was on account of the wrong disposition of the heart, by which the strictest outward obedience will ever be rendered unacceptable.

How little regard soever be had to Moses as an inspired writer, the custom of making sacrifices and oblations, which obtained over all the earth, and may be traced back to remotest antiquity, will lead to an acknowledgement, that this part of his history is more than probable. Nor can any tolerable reason be assigned for the beginning of such a practice, and the universal observation of it, but that it was originally of divine appointment, or recommended by one to whom the method of redemption was revealed, and whose authority was revered by the whole race of mankind; and from him by constant tradition conveyed from age to age, as a thing acceptable unto God: and as this must have been in the very earliest times, before men were scattered upon the face



face of the earth, it will be hard to find an era to which it may be fixed with greater probability of truth than that mentioned by Moses. His account likewise of the fall, and the revelation made to Adam, that "the seed of the woman" should bruise the head of the serpent," and "the serpent bruise his heel," is confirmed by the general expectation of a Saviour-God, who by labours and sufferings was to restore the golden age; a tradition as ancient as the other, and to be accounted for the same way. But as I have it not in view here to prove the truth of revealed religion, otherwise than by answering the present objection, it will be enough to take things as they are in the sacred books, without seeking for other authority; and I shall follow this way, both for saving of time and words.

The design and method of redemption being thus revealed, penitence enjoined, and a form of worship appointed, the next care was, to stifle the seeds of wickedness, and so to prevent its breaking out into acts of violence and injustice. Of this we have an early instance in the history of Cain; who being wroth even against God, be-

cause no respect was had to his offering, and full of envy against his brother, is made, as it were, judge in his own case: "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door." Thus, in the most affecting way, the impartiality of God is discovered to him, and the unreasonableness of that indignation which he had conceived against his brother. Nevertheless he gave way to his fury, and we find him again in the presence of God: a punishment is inflicted for the murder of Abel; but such a punishment as was most likely to work in him a true repentance, and to be an example to the rest of mankind: and that it might have its full effect, a mark is set upon him, lest, being a fugitive and a vagabond, he should be too soon cut off, as one that might be slain without a crime. But we have soon after a more agreeable instance of the divine condescension in conversing with men.

Enoch, the sixth from Adam, is said to have walked with God three hundred years after he begat Methuselah; by which expression nothing less can be meant, than  
during

during all this time a most intimate and extraordinary communication with God; for it is said again, "Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him;" he was exempted from the common fate of mankind, being translated to another life without passing through the shadow of death. Now of one found worthy to be so remarkably distinguished, we may safely affirm, that he had an exact knowledge of the divine will; and it cannot be thought unreasonable to believe, that he was taken from among men in this extraordinary manner, to give a sanction to the precepts and counsels which he had delivered from God.

Scarce was Enoch translated, when we find another preacher of righteousness raised up. Lamech, the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, begat Noah, who "was a just man, and perfect in his generations, and walked with God."

Thus you see, that if "the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually," it was not for want of knowledge, or that he was left to grope his way by the light of reason,

son. And when the flood was foretold, time was given for repentance: the ark was not built of a sudden, nor is it to be thought that Noah kept to himself the cause of his undertaking; and had the antediluvian world repented, like Nineveh at the preaching of Jonas, perhaps the fountains of the great deep had not been broke up, nor the windows of heaven opened.

When "the waters were dried up from off the earth," things returned pretty much to the same state as immediately after the fall; mankind reduced to one family, and Noah every way qualified to instruct his posterity in revealed religion. He had long conversed with those who had seen Enoch and Adam, and he himself walked with God: he could therefore not only communicate all the knowledge that was before the flood, but was likewise a fit canal for conveying such new lights as might then be necessary; and his miraculous preservation was such a proof of his being agreeable to God, as would give to his words the force of a divine oracle.

Noah had not been thirty years dead when the promise of a Messiah is renewed:

ed: Abramy in the seventy-fifth year of his age, is ordered to leave his own country, and told, that in him "all families of the earth should be blessed." A more particular explanation was unnecessary to one who might have seen Noah. In those days the hope of a redeemer was not confined to a nation, or family, or made obscure by a long tradition: Noah and his sons must have known it, and it was of too great consequence not to be published. Beside what might have been learned from them, such is the character of Abraham, that we cannot doubt of his having, by other means, a full and distinct knowledge of all that was fit to be revealed: "Shall I hide," says the Lord, when he was going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, "from Abraham that thing which I do?" Nor is he at this time the only person upon earth who had immediate communication with God, or by whom the divine will may have been discovered to mankind: Melchisedek is mentioned as one that stood even in a higher rank; he is called the *priest of the most high God*, and blesses Abraham: now the lesser is always blessed by the greater.

There



There have been many conjectures about Melchisedek. He is spoke of by St Paul in a way that must give the highest idea of his priesthood: and David says of the Messiah, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek." But it is sufficient here, that he was endued with divine knowledge, and capable to instruct men in the ways of God: and, though not equal to Melchisedek, there may have been others in other parts of the earth before Moses, whose history comes now to be only a history of his own nation; for even Melchisedek is not taken notice of but because he blessed Abraham. How much soever the children of this holy patriarch were under the divine care and protection, and, for particular reasons, separated from the rest of mankind, it does not follow, that the knowledge of the true God was extinguished save in the house of Israel. We have an instance in the book of Job, which seems to have been preserved by providence for a proof of this agreeable truth; and had it been as necessary to bring down the records of other nations as it was of Israel, we might have expected more.

Job

Job was not of the seed of Israel, yet there was "none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feared God, and eschewed evil;" and we find his knowledge answerable to this high character. We have also to observe, that to worship the true God was the religion of the country; and that Job speaks of the redemption of man, the resurrection of the dead, and last judgement, as of things well known, and making a part of that religion. "I know," says he, "that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." Zophar, in his answer, blames not these expressions as untrue, or unheard of before; he only shews the character and punishment of a hypocrite, which he takes Job to be, and endeavours to prove, that hope to such a one is without foundation. The same method is followed by his other friends: all agree in vindicating the divine justice, and in humbling, as they thought, the arrogance of

of a hypocrite or presumptuous man. Their words discover, indeed, a great deal of pride, but withal a knowledge in morality and religion, labouring only under one mistake, that prosperity is always the portion of the righteous, even in this life, and that whoever falls into adversity is wicked. They are at last undeceived, being obliged to have recourse to him they had condemned, to procure by sacrifice a pardon of their rash judgement and their pride. Perhaps too the mistake has been general; and if so, the sufferings of Job would be useful, not only to his friends, but to all that heard of them, besides the advantage it was to himself to have passed through so severe a trial \*.

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\* The book of Job is thought to have been writ by Moses; and by some reckoned no more than a representation of feigned characters, contrived for teaching the children of Israel patience. The style, which is entirely poetical, may have given rise to this opinion, and people have had their views in maintaining it: but all who would not use too great freedom with scripture, or even with antiquity, will acknowledge it to be sufficiently disproved, when they see the prophet Ezekiel speaking of Job as one who as really existed as Noah and Daniel, and mentioning him twice with them. St James also speaks of him; and these authorities are surely of greater weight than objections of critics against so ancient a history,

I think it impossible to read this admirable book, without perceiving that revealed religion was not confined to a nation or people; and that if it was afterwards mixed with fable and vile superstition, degenerating into gross idolatry, it was not for want of care on the part of God, but entirely owing to that corruption which soon overspread the earth, and, in spite of revelation, put men upon framing such ideas of the divine nature as suited best with their own practice, and gave greatest hope to expiate sin, and acquire the favour of the Deity, by certain forms of devotion, without a change in the heart or manners. Thus the light which came from God being set aside, or not looked on as the only rule of faith and religion, the uniformity was quickly lost; every nation, yea every person, taking the liberty to add such things as fear, or a wild imagination, suggested. And this was the state of the earth when the law was given from Mount Sinai.

In order to prepare things for the coming of the Messiah, a people is separated

history, not every where intelligible without some knowledge which they despise.

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from the rest of mankind, their law is promulged in a pompous manner, and ceremonies added, which prove an effectual bar to their mixing with other nations. A precise obedience is required, and even forced upon them: the smallest failure is not pardoned; men, families, and multitudes, are cut off; and every general depravation is followed by a general punishment. In short, all is carried on in a miraculous way; and without a management of this kind, (such was the grossness of this stiff-necked people, and their bent to idolatry), the law and ceremonies had been neglected, no sure expectation had remained of a Messiah, nor prophecy to point out the time and manner of his coming.

Here, then, we see a good reason for chusing a particular nation, and treating it differently from the rest; but no proof that this chosen people enhanced all the divine care. Others indeed were not called to worship in the temple, yet had such light as was proper for them; and God may have had worshippers "in truth and "in spirit" over all the earth. Might not Zoroaster, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, and



and many more, be taken notice of as men not destitute of all light but that of reason? and in all ages and countries, may there not have been men, valuable in the sight of God, though not dignified with the name of Philosophers, and of whom we never heard? Do we know all the ways by which God can make known his will? Are we sure, that, in the ages betwixt the law and the gospel, they who knew nothing of Moses, were left entirely to the dictates of reason? or is it impossible for God to communicate knowledge by ways incomprehensible to us, and unperceived by the persons themselves, when the natural or ordinary means are not provided? But even these perhaps were not so neglected by providence as we imagine: a little attention will discover several opportunities of coming at the knowledge of the true God, which look as if they had been managed and brought about expressly for this purpose, whatever use may have been made of them.

People came to Jerusalem from all parts to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and to see his glory: and the dispersion of the ten tribes, was like sending so many mis-

sionaries through the earth. We know not indeed the fruit; and how should we, since we have no history so ancient? But are we sure there was none? And if it be thought that these tribes, being dispersed for the multitude of their sins, they were unfit preachers of righteousness, let what was revealed to Elijah, when the degeneracy was exceeding great, be remembered: — “ Yet I have left me seven thousand  
“ in Israel, all the knees which have not  
“ bowed unto Baal.” However, the seventy years captivity of Judah is not liable to this objection: they worship the God of Israel in a strange land; several prophets are raised up; and we find Daniel in the court of the king of Babylon, and ruler of the province.

Under Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, are set over the affairs of Babylon; who refusing to worship the golden image, publicly confess the true God before Nebuchadnezzar; and the miracle by which they were preserved in the fiery furnace, draws from the king this remarkable decree, That “ every people, nation, and language, which speak any  
“ thing amiss against the God of Shadrach,  
“ Meshach,

“Meshach, and Abed-nego, shall be cut in  
 “pieces, and their houses made a dung-  
 “hill, because there is no other god that  
 “can deliver after this sort.”

We have another instance of the same  
 kind under Darius the Mede, when Daniel  
 was cast into the lion's den. The decree  
 is yet more remarkable than that of Ne-  
 buchadnezzar:—“Then King Darius  
 “wrote unto all people, nations, and lan-  
 “guages, that dwell on the earth, Peace  
 “be multiplied unto you. I make a de-  
 “cree, that in every dominion of my  
 “kingdom, men tremble and fear before  
 “the God of Daniel: for he is the living  
 “God, and stedfast for ever, and his  
 “kingdom that which shall not be de-  
 “stroyed, and his dominion shall be even  
 “unto the end. He delivereth and rescu-  
 “eth, and he worketh signs and wonders  
 “in heaven and in earth, who hath deliver-  
 “ed Daniel from the power of the lions.”

The servants of God are not always re-  
 scued miraculously from the hands of wic-  
 ked men, perhaps never but when provi-  
 dence has other ends to serve. Had Sha-  
 drach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, died in  
 the fiery furnace, and Daniel in the lion's  
 den,

den, it was but a little sooner than they must have died in a natural way ; and, to such, a few years sooner or later is not of great importance. Their preservation then was but an accidental effect of these miracles, and the decrees of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius the end ; that by so authentic documents of the divine power, all the nations of the earth might know that “ God is the Lord.” And to this many of the other extraordinary things that are to be read in the book of Daniel ought to be referred. Again,

After the captivity was ended, and the Jews suffered to rebuild Jerusalem, and to dwell in the land of Judea, many of them continued in all the provinces of the Persian empire, as we see by the book of Esther : and when it was destroyed, we find by other histories that they were scattered up and down in the same manner, under the Greeks and Romans.

Thus it appears, that in all ages betwixt the law and the gospel, the true God might have been known and distinguished even by revelation. And we must not judge too hastily concerning the effects of this providential care, though we hear not of numerous

merous conversions to Judaism, which was never intended for an universal religion. The law of Moses, I mean the ceremonial law, being like the municipal laws of a country, only obligatory upon the nation to which it was given, it was enough for others, in the terms of Darius's decree, "to tremble and fear before the God of "Daniel," the God who made heaven and earth; to acknowledge that "he is the "living God, steadfast for ever, and his "kingdom that which shall not be destroyed," and that other gods are but "the works of his hands," and creatures, however superior to men; and in consequence of this faith, to live in a humble dependence upon him, acting sincerely according to their light, whatever it was.

This, now, may have been the religion of many, even in the darkest times; and though the Jews came to be a despised people long before our Saviour's days, their knowledge being vastly more distinct than the tradition of other nations, they who sought after truth may have been much assisted by it: and these instances of the divine care, with many more which might be collected from the sacred books,

ought



ought to convince every one, that idolatry prevailed, not because there were not opportunities of knowing better, but because “the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

It is true revelation was not so clear nor universal as after the coming of the Messiah: but will that infer partiality on the part of God? was it proper that Jesus Christ should live and die oftener than once? or was there a fitter time for his coming than that in which he appeared? Does not reason itself discover, that the gospel could not have been preached through all the earth in any age before that of Augustus, when the Roman greatness had opened a communication with the most barbarous countries, by uniting all under one monarchy? “But God might have done by miracle what the Romans did in a natural way, or conveyed the apostles from place to place by almighty power.” Let the time be fixed, then, in which the Messiah ought to have come: but, first, let us be sure that it shall be a time in which men were as well

well disposed to receive the gospel ; for it must not be pretended, that, by miracle too, God might force them to believe.

It is urged again, that even after the coming of Jesus Christ, revelation has been still confined to particular countries ; before the gospel had reached to “ the ends of the earth,” many of those nations where it was first planted, having fallen away, some to Mahometanism, others to gross idolatry. This indeed shews the wretched state of human nature, the violence or force of passion, and weakness of reason ; but proves nothing against the truth of religion. The gate to life is open ; men are invited to enter, but not compelled. “ But a great part of the earth was unknown till of late, and consequently its inhabitants never heard of Jesus Christ.” True ; and many nations of Europe knew nothing of him for some hundreds of years after his crucifixion : but is it very unreasonable to think, that God, who knows the hearts of men, would have taken care to have them sooner informed, had they been sooner disposed to believe ? and may we not think

in the same way concerning the inhabitants of America?

People who talk or write against revealed religion, as being inconsistent with the impartiality and justice of God, and really fancy there is strength in their arguments, should not stop at Deism: they will find the same objections as strong against providence; and if their thoughts agree with their reasoning, they must believe there is no God, or that he is unfit to govern. And this so much boasted benevolence which, they say, makes them speak and write against revelation, ought to carry them a little farther, and make them wish, for the good of mankind, that the government of the world could be transferred to a Shaftesbury or a Tindal. But if they will have us to believe that they think it in a good hand, might we not expect, after they have argued against revelation, because it has not been equally clear at all times, and to all men, that, for the glory of reason, this universal all-sufficient light, one instance at least should be given of a system of pure unmixed natural religion which might be called rational, and was the religion of a country?

Could

Could this be done, and I am sure it cannot, this natural religion of theirs would, as to its universality, come very much short of revelation. But if they only pretend to discover something like it with a few particular men, they will find it still more difficult to maintain the impartiality and justice of God; and must give up this darling hypothesis, or own that the divinity they adore, is less impartial and less just than the God of the Christians.

I know there is a beaten answer always at hand: "God requires only that men act according to their knowledge, and every one in doing so, does his duty;" which indeed is so absolutely certain, that it may very well pass into a maxim: yet I believe it would not be thought advisable to rest contented with such knowledge as one could make out for himself by the sole light of his own particular reason. It is the general opinion, that the religion of nature would be but coarsely delineated by a self-taught philosopher; and the blunders of such a one, either in practice or theory, could not be otherwise excused, than by saying, he had no opportunity of knowing better. But let him be brought

into a country where exact systems of religion (call it natural or revealed) were every where to be met with, and hardly a man but could discover to him some mistake in his opinions, should he obstinately reject all those means of information, and persist to live in his own way, his blunders then would be real faults, unless he was a fool or a madman; for that is the only case in which one that acted after this manner, could be supposed to act according to his knowledge. To say, he had nothing to do with the reason of other men, and that a greater degree of knowledge must be useless to him, else he had found it within himself, were to contradict the common sense of mankind.

AND now, to conclude this argument, and with it this part, whatever knowledge comes by revelation, is plainly not more extraneous than that which one receives from his fellow-creatures: and as it evidently appears, that the light of reason, that natural light I mean which every one may properly call his own, is not sufficient save when a better cannot be had; may it not be true, or, rather, is it not unquestionable



able, that the reason of all men together will furnish but a defective light, and consequently not sufficient but when they have not a better? On what account then shall we reject that which revelation offers? We see the unreasonableness of refusing assistance from men, and shall we refuse it from God? Let us, on the contrary, accept, with love and thankfulness, the light which it has pleased him to give\*. Let us believe, and not be ashamed of our faith; and let us make a sacrifice of our sins to that God who hath not withheld his only Son, but hath given him up unto death to cleanse us from our iniquities, and to restore us to the glorious privilege of being "children of God, and co-heirs with Christ." For if we will not deny

\* A clearer light, no doubt, might have been given; and some have had the insolence or folly (one hardly knows what to call it) to ground objections upon this, as if they knew better than God what degree of light is fittest. Light absolutely clear may be as unfit for beings in a state of purification and trial, as total darkness; and there may be such variety of states and of beings, that every degree betwixt the two extremes may be the fittest for one or other. Who then shall fix the precise point? so precise, that whatever falls lower, or rises higher, must be deemed imposture.

ourselves;

ourselves; if we will not "take up our  
"cross, and follow Jesus," we shall have no  
part in his blood. He is our pattern, as  
well as our deliverer; and they only who  
are willing to imitate him, will be called  
to the marriage-supper; for they only  
are qualified to receive the wedding-gar-  
ment. It is for them that the new Jerusa-  
lem is prepared: and "God shall wipe a-  
"way all tears from their eyes; and there  
"shall be no more death, neither sorrow  
"nor crying; neither shall there be any  
"more pain: for the former things are  
"passed away."

DISCOURSE  
UPON  
RELIGION,

SECOND PART.

SECTION I.

1. *Some false opinions concerning virtue, and the love of moral beauty.*
2. *Of the love of God and our neighbour.*
3. *Of faith.*

I. **L**IFE is a stage through which we pass to a state that will abide for ever ; and the manner of our future existence is determined by our conduct here. Eternal joy is prepared for those who, by living righteously, are qualified to enter into it ; while inconceivable anguish is the portion of the negligent and unfaithful. Life is valuable in this view,  
and

and in no other ; the present enjoyments being too little, and too unstable, to give happiness. Man is not made to centre all his aims and wishes on a few years of low delight with many drawbacks : what we have set our hearts upon is often snatched away ; and no earthly happiness can be so firm but one blow may overturn it. Such is the present situation ; melancholy indeed ! if it was not for the hope of better things. This hope, however, cannot be well grounded but to those who live according to the rules prescribed by religion : it is from it we must learn the right use of life ; and the only way to happiness is to observe its precepts.

That as soon as we exist, we are embarked for eternity, is an obvious reflection ; yet I am afraid it is but seldom made : a croud of other reflections follow upon it, and men are unwilling to be disturbed in the enjoyment of pleasures they are determined not to abandon. Thus life passes away, its principal business is forgot, and we enter upon eternity before we begin to think of it. A conduct of this sort is not the more reasonable for being common : we may lessen our fears, but the danger

danger is still the same. If we saw a ship tossing on a stormy sea, and knew the helm was not mended, the sails unmanaged, and the compass neglected, it were impossible to persuade us the voyage could end well. Life is the sea, we ourselves the ship, and eternity the end of the voyage. If the love of God has no place in our hearts, if we have no desire, no tendency, to be united to him, it is like sailing without a compass: if the affections are not regulated, and directed to the proper objects; if we have lost the government of the passions, or take no pains to manage them; if the will becomes headstrong, disregarding the dictates of reason; the helm is thrown up, and the vessel left to the mercy of the wind and waves. This, indeed, is the poorest account of life that can be given; and few will care to apply it to themselves: it will be owned, however, that many lives have been passed in this strange unthinking manner.

There is another way of which people are not so much ashamed, because it has an air of rationality. The passions are under a sort of management, and are kept from violent outbreakings; the af-



fections are restrained, at least in appearance, from objects that are accounted vile and dishonourable; a plan of life is laid, in which pleasure and interest have the chief place, and the will suffers itself to be directed by reason in the pursuit of them. Here the ship seems to have a regular course; but the end of the voyage being forgot, we can hardly applaud either the skill or the conduct of the pilot.

A third sort act, or pretend to act, more philosophically. *Just* and *fit* are words they are mighty fond of: they can talk big of virtue, and show the deformity of vice. "Human nature is degraded by  
" the use of sensual pleasures; those of  
" the mind are alone worthy of a rational  
" being. To be always doing good is  
" virtue: and universal benevolence the  
" characteristic of a truly virtuous man." These are fine ideas! but where does this philosophy end? "By the conduct of the  
" passions, and by thus acting up to the  
" dignity of his nature, every one may  
" secure his own happiness: he may grow  
" lovely in his own eyes, may dote up-  
" on himself, and feed his mind with  
" the

"the bright representation of his virtue \*"

Who does not see that this disinterested scheme (for so they call it) runs into the most extravagant self-love? We are told by others, that, for our own sakes, we must endeavour to love God, because we cannot be happy if we do not: but they tell us, we ought to make ourselves lovely, that we may love ourselves, and so be happy. I know not whether all the consequences that may be drawn from this scheme of happiness will be owned: perhaps they will; for the whole is borrowed from the Stoicks, who often overstretched the ideas of virtue; and even their conceptions of the Deity are sometimes very confused. I say, sometimes; for admirable sentiments of resignation, and of the love of God, are to be found in their writings †. But whatever success people may have in this project of heightening their self-admiration, they will never find in themselves a sufficient fund of happiness:

\* *Characteristicks*, by Shaftesbury; and, *The Conduct of the Passions*, by Hutcheson.

† In *Epietetus* and *Marcus Antoninus*.

and if we saw one pretending to it, we could hardly avoid thinking of the happiness of a bedlamite. Yet I am far from denying a moral sense; or that there is a real and natural complacency in beauty, whether we observe it in ourselves, or in others. But this complacency will not rise to happiness. The mind is not so framed as to rest satisfied with any thing less than the contemplation of infinite perfection; and the enjoyment of that being who is infinitely perfect.

Instead of these lofty ideas of human nature, or rather of the self-sufficiency of of man, (for his nature is yet more excellent than they think of, but in a different way), another system is offered by another set of philosophers, or what you please to call them. "Virtue and vice are words of no meaning; and interest the only standard for judging of the manners of men. If the world ~~was~~ in general what the moralists call *virtuous*, it were not worth living in; for private vices are public benefits \*."

This uncommon hypothesis being attacked from several quarters, a trial of

\* Fable of the Bees, part 1.

skill is proposed in a very formal way, and fair play promised! The champions appear, and the world is finely diverted with seeing a Horatio made the dupe of a Cleomenes. After a few pushes, with much fierceness and little skill, he throws by his weapons, declares himself a disciple, and begs the favour of being instructed. Then he is let into the valuable secret, that naturally man is no better than the beasts. Some little difference indeed is allowed in the texture of the brain; but the chief advantage lies in being longer young. "The lion, and many other animals, are nobler creatures; but they grow up too soon to be much benefited by a good education. If it was not for that, we, and our forefathers long ago, might have seen monkeys professing medicine and philosophy; and lions making war, to keep the balance of Afric."

One needs not the help of Cleomenes to make out such a building as this foundation will bear: Horatio however grows inquisitive; and man is conducted step by step, from the rude and brutal state of nature, to that of cunning, and profound dissimulation: which being the highest perfection

perfection he can attain, our philosophers have nothing more to do. So they part, both pleased : Cleomenes has made a profelyte; and Horatio has the good fortune to discover, that, setting aside the shape, he is naturally just such a thing as the horses that draw his coach \*.

Self-love takes a different form in the hands of other managers. “ Virtue and  
“ vice are real things : but could they be  
“ separated from profit and loss, there  
“ would be no beauty in the one, nor deformity in the other. A moral sense,  
“ or inward perception of good or evil in  
“ the actions or dispositions of any being,  
“ so as to make us like or dislike independent of interest, is a chimera. Actions are good or ill as they tend to  
“ make the agent happy or miserable.  
“ Thus some actions being commanded,  
“ others forbidden, and happiness or misery annexed to our obedience or disobedience, they thereby become good or  
“ ill, obedience virtue, and disobedience  
“ vice; for the same reason, a willingness to obey is a virtuous disposition,  
“ an unwillingness the contrary : but

\* Fable of the Bees, part 2.



“take away the reward and the punish-  
“ment, the actions become indifferent;  
“and are no longer the subject of vir-  
“tue or vice. The virtue of actions and  
“dispositions is to be computed by the  
“quantity of good or happiness that a-  
“rises from them to the agent: but tem-  
“poral happiness bearing no proportion  
“to the eternal, those only are called vir-  
“tuous that have respect to it. Thus the  
“word *virtue* comes to be appropriated  
“to morality and religion; though, strict-  
“ly speaking, every action and disposi-  
“tion by which the smallest degree of  
“present happiness is attained, may, and  
“ought to be called *virtuous*, provided a  
“greater degree of happiness is not hin-  
“dered by it; for in that case it would be  
“vice: which is also to be computed in  
“the same way, both as to things tem-  
“poral and eternal; the difference being  
“only of greater and less. For there must  
“be virtue or vice in every action and dis-  
“position in which interest is concerned;  
“and if it was not for it, there would be  
“neither the one nor the other in any.”

In this definition of virtue there is no-  
thing but what must be acknowledged to  
belong

belong to it by those who, not admitting of moral deformity or beauty independent of consequences, can find no cause of love but interest, nor other motive or principle of desires and actions.

That any actions of men are so absolutely disinterested as to have no motive whatsoever but pure unmixed benevolence, love of virtue, or love of God, would be thought, perhaps even by some who acknowledge a moral sense, too great a strength of virtue or goodness to be ascribed to fallen creatures; yet surely a disinterestedness of this kind there may be in human actions, and human characters, while interest bears so great a sway, that motives unsupported by it will have weight but just enough to turn the balance where selfish views are so equal on both sides as to make a sort of equilibrium: and this, I think, is not such a mighty work but that we may ascribe to man, to every man, a benevolence, love of virtue, or love of God, sufficient to perform it \*. Now here is a certain degree

\* I know it is said, we act in consequence of these motives that we may have the pleasure of approving, or avoid

gree of goodness, and with it moral beauty. Small ! you will say, and scarce deserving our love. Small it is ; yet lovely. For this seed, this almost imperceptible grain, gives a constant invariable bias to virtue, and, if rightly cultivated, will infallibly swell so as to influence our actions when the balance is not precisely equal with respect to interest, and even grow to such a solid bulk as to become the determining principle on all occasions. And every degree of it, from the lowest to the highest, if any can be called highest where the progress is perhaps infinite ; I say, every degree of it has a proportionable beauty ; and, without regard to consequences, will be loved, in ourselves or others, more or less, according to the state or acuteness of the moral sense in the observer : whereas the contrary disposition

void the pain of condemning ourselves. But whence this pleasure, or this pain ? Why approve, or condemn, if there be no moral deformity or beauty, and sense to perceive it ? Besides, may we not suppose cases where something shall be on the side of interest in the other scale, to keep the balance even ? The thing is not impossible ; and then it will not be the hope of pleasure, or fear of pain, that is the determining principle, or interest under any form : yet one, I think, would not be at a loss to chuse his part.

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is always looked on with some inward abhorrence, and the actions proceeding from it judged to be evil, even when we ourselves are benefited by them. Self-love indeed, by holding up a false glass, may conceal from our eyes a real deformity, or make us believe there is beauty where there is none; but this only shews, that interest has some weight; and no body thinks it has not.

In order to make us love, two things only are necessary, viz. beauty in the object, and in us a sense or perception of it: when these meet, we shall infallibly love, whether it be our interest or not; yea, was damnation to be the consequence, we cannot cease to love while the object appears amiable. I say, appears amiable; for it is in our power so to withdraw our attention, that this sense of beauty shall not operate with force, and even by degrees so to change the whole frame of our mind, that what is really beautiful shall strike us but confusedly, perhaps not strike us at all. Then indeed our love ceases; not because it is our interest, but because the object is no longer amiable in our eyes. Again, was heaven to be the reward of loving, unless  
we

we perceive a beauty in the object, or rather feel it, (for I speak not of the barren ideas of the understanding), it will be impossible for us to love. Interest may prompt us to fix our attention, and, as far as we are able, to put our mind in such a frame, that our sense of beauty may act with vigour; and if we succeed in this, we shall infallibly love; not because it is our interest, but because we see and feel that the object is beautiful.

Thus I think it must be evident to every one who can separate from an idea all that does not absolutely belong to it, that love by its very nature is disinterested. And if so, there is no room for controversy about the meaning of that precept which our Saviour has called *the first and great commandment*; the difference betwixt loving God, and loving him with all our heart, being no other than the difference betwixt greater and less, weaker and stronger. But I will not so hastily leave a point our Saviour has declared to be of such consequence, that upon it, and the other commandment, which is like unto it, "hang the law and the prophets.

D d 2

II. IF



II. If the beauty of the infinitely perfect being fixes our attention, and strikes us so as to raise our love, only when it is viewed in a particular light, there must be some fault in us, some disease in the mind, which hinders our sense of beauty from acting with its natural force. When the eye is sound, and the taste of beauty as it ought to be, a perfect object appears amiable at all times, and in every point of view; and we love without reasoning or reflection, as we breathe the air: for such has been the will of our creator. The functions of the spiritual life are as natural as those of the animal, and, when all is right, are performed with the same ease: and as it would be an undoubted proof of some bodily indisposition, if one could not breathe but in this or that particular posture; not to love God but when we consider him as our benefactor, shews as plainly a disorder in the mind. This seems to be extremely clear; yet I shall carry on the comparison a little farther, which, I think, will lead to a full discovery of all the connection that can possibly subsist betwixt self-love and the love of God, the first being considered as a motive

tive or cause of the other; and whether, in that sense, there may not be a state in which the connection shall entirely cease.

Suppose then a person unable to breathe but in one posture, and therefore keeping himself in it with a good deal of trouble, submitting at the same time to the prescriptions of a physician, and now and then swallowing a bitter potion; it may be true, that, in all this, he is determined by interest; and to reflect on the advantage or pleasure of health and life, may be his only support in so disagreeable a situation. Thus, in one sense, it will be a proper enough way of speaking, to call interest the cause of his breathing; since, but for it, he would not subject himself to the doing of certain things, which, in his diseased state, must be done, else the action of the lungs would cease. But this way of speaking will be proper only while the disease continues: nor could any thing be more ridiculous, than to fancy that one would not open his mouth to draw in the air, if he did not reflect it was his interest; and when we are in health, no more is necessary on our part. Nor does this require a formal act, or explicit consent of the will.

Such

Such indeed is the power we have over ourselves, that we may at any time stop the flux and reflux of the air; but not without a peremptory determination of the will, and an act following upon it, accompanied with the most exact attention; the consequence of which will be a sort of convulsion of the inward parts, and, if continued, extinction of life: but let the attention cease before the violence on nature be carried too far, and the panting lungs will greedily receive the air, neither waiting orders from the will, nor giving time to deliberate whether it be advantageous or not that the animal functions be again performed.

Now, to apply these observations to the spiritual life, let us think of a person labouring under such a disease of the mind as hinders him from loving God "with all his heart," and sensible that till it be removed, he cannot be truly happy, nor out of danger of falling into that miserable state which is called *the death of the soul*. It will not be thought unnatural that he should desire a cure, and not only enter upon such a course as will be effectual, but even persevere in it; eternal happiness

ness on the one hand, and misery on the other, being motives accounted strong enough to influence a reasonable man. His life then will be a life of self-denial; for such is our Saviour's prescription, who is the true physician of souls. In short, he will endeavour to "run the race which is set before him." I shall own he does it that he may obtain the prize. It shall even be granted, that if there was no fear of misery, or hope of so glorious a reward, he would pass his days like the fool, who "hath said in his heart there is no God;" that is, if his interest was not concerned, if heaven and hell were things indifferent to him, he would not deny himself, nor press forward in the narrow way that leads to life. And as in this case the disease would be always gaining ground, instead of loving God with all his heart, it is more than probable that in a short time he would not love him at all. It will be true, therefore, that interest is the cause of his love to God, in so far as it has made him deny himself, and take up his cross, that being the only method by which his spiritual life could be preserved. But,   
When the mind is restored to a state of perfect

perfect health, when every faculty is acting regularly and without incumbrance, there is no occasion for self-denial, or any sort of violence, to make us love God. For as, with respect to finite objects, a taste of beauty is natural to the moral sense, and the love that follows upon it, no less natural to the heart; and as the one bears always an exact proportion to the other, and the taste of beauty an exact proportion to the perfection of the object, it follows, that infinite beauty will produce in the spirit a love as great as we are capable of, or we will love it with all our heart: we will love, and cleave to it, with the whole force of that in the spirit which bears analogy to what, in speaking of the soul, we call the *heart* \*. And the object being

\* As often as the perfect love of God is expressed, by "loving with all our heart," it ought to be understood in this sense, and the distinction betwixt the soul and spirit attended to. That distinction has been already explained; but as the manner in which the spirit acts, or is acted upon, cannot be rightly conceived but by the pure; the ideas formed by others of this perfect love, and the sensations arising upon it, must be infinitely short of the truth: it is no wonder then that spiritual writers speak of it as differing widely from every other love. But how just soever their expressions may be, we know it is love, and that there must be some analogy betwixt it and what we



being infinite, this spiritual power or faculty, or whatever it is called, will be so entirely filled, or so forcibly drawn, that it will be impossible for it to admit, embrace, or cleave to, any other object whatsoever. Nor indeed can other objects be admitted in any case: the soul has faculties adapted to them; but the spirit is the peculiar temple of God; created things can find no entrance there; it has no eye, no ear, no heart for them; all is for God, and him only.

And as our love to infinite beauty will thus have an agreement to the nature of the object, and entirely fill the heart, our love to other objects will be only a secondary love, flowing from, and referring back to, this supreme love; we will love them because God loves them, and every degree of beauty they possess, will lead us to the love of that being from whom all beauty is derived. And as the supreme love engages the spiritual faculties in a direct attention to the one infinitely perfect

we feel, since our Saviour has joined it with the love of our neighbour. It is only with a view to this analogy that I speak of it, not pretending to fix its nature to any precise idea.

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being; so likewise this secondary love engages the faculties of the soul in a direct attention to the objects of it, making us exert ourselves in actions of love and charity, and uniting us in heart and mind to the love which God bears to all his creatures. Nor have we any other kind of love to bestow upon ourselves; the supreme love being now unalterably fixed upon God, there remains only for self a secondary love, of the same nature with that immediately described, like it referring all to God, and cleaving to its object because God loves it. We will therefore love God, and him only, "with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves;" and this in a way so natural, that it will be impossible for us to do otherwise without a peremptory determination of the will, and such an act, or number of acts, following upon it, as will disorder the whole spiritual frame, throwing it again into a violent diseased state.

And here, self-love, far from being, in any sense whatsoever, the cause of our love to God, is only a stream flowing from that pure love with which we love God for himself, and other objects in proportion

to the love with which he loves them. What he loves more than us, we love more ; what he loves less, we love less. Nor does this make any alteration as to the desire of happiness and aversion from misery, which are and will be natural to every being : they are purely mechanical, and must be felt so long as we have any sense of pleasure and pain, and have as little to do with self-love as with the love of God. There is indeed a desire of happiness which proceeds from benevolence ; and that will be in proportion to the degree of love, whether we ourselves be the object or another : but as we have some feeling of it, even in our present state, every one will perceive a difference betwixt it and the first.

To those who acknowledge a moral sense, this account of the nature of love will be clear enough ; and others ought to believe it from the word of God. At least, they ought to believe there may be a disinterested love, though they do not fully comprehend that all love must be so. Nor is it an extraordinary degree of faith to believe that God does not require what is impossible or unnecessary : " Thou shalt

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F e 2 " love



"love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,  
"with all thy soul, with all thy mind,  
"and with all thy strength; and thy  
"neighbour as thyself," is a passage of  
scripture; but how to make common sense  
of it, if disinterested love is not meant, is  
more than every body will find out. This,  
I know, is a talk which has been often  
proposed to the defenders of self-love;  
but I do not know that ever they have per-  
formed it. They ought to tell us how we  
may love God "with all our heart," &c.  
and at the same time love ourselves more;  
how we may love our neighbour as our-  
selves, yet not love him as ourselves, or  
more than God. To wrest so plain a text,  
would, I think, hardly have been attempt-  
ed, if people had not got into a way of  
considering disinterested love, and the de-  
sire of happiness, as contradictory things:  
so, after proving with much labour what  
no body denies, viz. the desire of happi-  
ness, they conclude, by a strange sort of  
ratiocination, "Every being desires its  
"own happiness; therefore every being  
"loves only for its own sake." Having  
thus proved, that disinterested love is im-  
possible, they fall to work with the scrip-  
ture,

ture, under pretence of doing the world good service, by shewing that God does not require impossibilities. But if it be found, that disinterested love, and the desire of happiness, are not contradictory things, the scripture may stand in its plain natural sense, without dishonour to God, or disadvantage to mankind.

Allowing now the desire of happiness to be as natural and necessary as they please to make it; that is, allowing it to be impossible for any being not to desire happiness; if it is not self-sufficient, this desire will force it out of itself, and it will find in other beings qualities proper to advance its happiness, or not: to those which possess the first it will be attached; while it passes by the rest with indifference, or rejects them with abhorrence. This fitness or unfitness to give happiness is, by a confusion of ideas, generally looked upon as the cause of love or aversion; and so we are said to love or hate only for our own sakes. But it is quite the contrary: it is our love or aversion that makes them fit or unfit to give us happiness. For if we go out of ourselves with a cold indifference to objects and qualities of all sorts, it is impossible

impossible we can receive the smallest degree of happiness from any: they have neither fitness nor unfitness, nor any thing to make us desire or reject them, or to raise in us the least sensation of any kind. Thus, whatever qualities or perfections a being may have, considered abstractly; whatever fitness or sufficiency to give happiness to others; if we do not love it, it has no fitness with respect to us; and this is no less certain than that there are beings not happy.

God is infinitely perfect, and willing as well as sufficient to make his creatures happy; but even in him there is no fitness to give happiness to those who do not love him. The divine communications by which the angels are made happy, would be received with abhorrence and aversion by the devils. Do not imagine that I am speaking too boldly: the truth of what I here assert is founded on the infinite goodness of God; and it will, yea it must, be acknowledged by all who believe not eternal decrees of reprobation, that were it otherwise, it is impossible, absolutely impossible, there could be any misery. It is therefore certain, that if the  
devils

devils could love God; their misery would be turned into happiness: for they would then receive the divine communications in the same way the angels receive them; and they are never refused to any being that is in a condition to be made happy by them. But it is the interest of the devils to be happy, as well as of the angels; and we may suppose they desire it no less: yea, their feeling of this desire will be greater; for it always bears a proportion to the want of happiness, or the degree of misery. Thus, if motives to love can only be drawn from interest and the desire of happiness, they cannot be stronger, perhaps not so strong, in any being as in the devils; nevertheless they continue not to love.

Interest will make us desire to love, as soon as we are persuaded we cannot be happy otherwise; and this is all we can do for our own sakes: but we may desire as much as we please, yet if there be nothing amiable in the object, nothing that appears so to us, we shall never love; and consequently it will never be fit to give us happiness. There are in God infinite perfections: but if (like the beasts) we have

no sense or perception of them, they are a nothing to us; if we have a sense of them, but such as to make them appear disagreeable, (which we have reason to believe is the state of the devils), they have a fitness to make us miserable; but if our sense or perception of them makes them appear beautiful, so as to excite our love, they have then a fitness to make us happy.

To speak of no-fitness in God has, I know, a strange sound, and it is with unwillingness I make use of the word: but it is folly to be alarmed with words, when the meaning is plain; and I think you will hardly mistake it here. God is unchangeable; he is now the same he was before the fall of angels or men: but that agreement betwixt the moral sense and the object, without which its beauty cannot be perceived, no longer subsisting in them, they became unhappy, because they ceased to love, and must continue so until this agreement be restored. We cannot be happy without love: such is the will of our creator, and so has he formed us.

Now as interest will carry us no farther towards happiness than a desire to love,  
and



and before we can love, we must find something amiable in the object; it is plain our love is founded, not upon interest, but upon this thing, whatever it is: and a love not founded upon interest is a disinterested love. Till we love with all our heart, interest may be the cause of our desire to love; and not longer: but it is the agreement betwixt the moral sense and the object which is the cause of our love; and no other cause will ever be found for it. Now this agreement is to the mind what a good constitution is to the body; (precisely so, I think; if that however should not be allowed, the resemblance is at least such as may very well bear a comparison); and to fancy it inconsistent with the desire of happiness, would be as ridiculous as to fancy the other inconsistent with the desire of health. But one whose health is habitual, is not always thinking about it; and with respect to the animal œconomy, it is of no consequence whether he be, or be not. The heart beats, and all follows of course; and perhaps better while he is acting the part for which health and life are given, than if he was constantly interrupting  
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himself with ardent and anxious wishes that his health may continue. He may even feel no wishes at all of that sort, or feel them little, unless they be awakened by some indisposition, or the sight of a diseased person; and his way of living may be regular and temperate for other reasons than the desire of health. The case indeed will be very different with one under a painful disease. His wishes for health will be strong, and almost continual; and all his actions, or most of them, will be done with a view to his recovery. Might not this be applied to spiritual things, putting the word *happiness* for *health*?

The desire of happiness is natural to every being, and every unhappy being must feel it. But when the mind is in a state of perfect health, or approaching to it, this desire does not influence the conduct, or the will; love, which points directly to its object, is the spring of all. It loves God, and because it loves, desires to please him; the rest follow. Does it not desire happiness? It rests in the divine will, and would have no happiness in contradiction

tradiction to it\*. This, we are sure, is the state of the saints in heaven; and may be the state of some upon earth.

If any shall still incline to look upon this desire of happiness as an effect of self-love, (though in reality it is of a different nature, and consequently a proof that it subsists in the most perfect state), it is not worth disputing. There is no harm in self-love, if it goes not beyond the bounds which are set to it by God; that is, if we love God with all our heart, and ourselves no more than we love our neighbour. One thing indeed must be entirely sunk if this idea of love be true; and it is propriety, or an unjust and unsatisfiable desire to appropriate every thing, and, were it possible, to put ourselves in the place of

\* Whoever has observed the common effects of love when a fellow-creature is the object, will not question the truth of what is here asserted, or think that any thing can be said too strong of the love of the infinitely perfect being: and every person who searches honestly into his own mind, will perceive a clear idea of this love; while others can see nothing in theirs but interest and interested views. Our Saviour says, in the garden, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." Here we see the natural desire of happiness still subsisting, but yielding to, or rather swallowed up in, the desire that the will of God be done.

God. Which way soever it has come, it is now the root of our corruption, and the essence of that disease which occasions all our trouble; and is well known, at least by those who have right notions of religion, though people are not always careful to give it its own name, *Self-love*, as being a more common word, is often used in a sense that will only agree to it; and if I have used it, or shall hereafter use it, in the same way, this caution, I hope, will prevent mistakes as to the meaning \*.

Propriety then may be considered as the poison of the soul; and faith is the never-failing, indeed the only, antidote; that faith which, as St Paul describes it, [Heb. xi. 1.], is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen;" as being a spark of divine light in the centre of the soul; subsisting there as a seed wherein is contained really and substantially all we can hope in this life or another; and is therefore called by our Saviour, the kingdom of heaven, when, speaking to the Pharisees, he says, [Luke

\* See the sixth and seventh paragraphs of sect. i. 3. part 1.

xvii. 21.], "The kingdom of heaven is within you."

Now as a seed, when planted in a proper soil, rightly cultivated, and exposed to the rays of the sun and the dew of heaven, does, by an evolution natural to it, grow to be a large tree, spreading its roots and fibres every where, and putting forth branches able to bear solid fruit; just so, if man do but contribute what is necessary on his part for cultivating the field, and suffer it to be impregnated with the rays of the Sun of Righteousness, and to be watered with the divine grace, this heavenly seed, or rather this participation of the Deity; (if the expression may be allowed), which is planted in his heart, diffuses itself through the whole soul, and grows from the smallest of seeds to be a great tree, bringing forth fruit unto repentance and holiness of life.

I thought once to have contented myself with giving you this short account of faith; but as the mistakes concerning it are very common, and often, if not always, dangerous, a few words to explain it farther may be useful, perhaps necessary.



III. WHEN the spirit, or the centre of the soul, which is an infinite desire of light, joy, peace, or happiness, and capable of receiving God with infinite sensibility, was turned away from God, it became dark and gross, hating the pure Divine Light; and reason and all the faculties were so turned to the creatures and material objects, that they became incapable of perceiving the things of God: therefore, in order to man's recovery, God makes use of material and outward things, as sounds or words, writings, and other sensible signs, to inform the mind of what is fit and useful to bring it back, and what is hurtful and pernicious; which could not be discovered by dark and perverted reason. Now when God is pleased to reveal these things by words, or other outward signs, accompanied with certain marks of his divine power, to convince men that the revelations are from him; and when they see or hear these revelations, and without hesitation believe them to come from God, then they are said to have faith. But this is only historical, not true faith; and is neither the object, nor the light, nor the act of true saving faith;

faith; it is indeed a mean that leads to it, and no more. Nay sometimes it goes no deeper than the understanding or reason, producing only barren fruitless ideas concerning God and divine things, which have no influence on the heart; and in this case it takes the name of *dead faith*, being, as St James expresses it, "without works."

But when the mind turns from the things which are revealed to be evil and pernicious, to those which are eternally good; when, by using the proper helps, and removing impediments, it gets above sense and reason, offering up itself to be filled with God, and desiring nothing but him; then may it be said to exercise an act of truly divine and saving faith; and even to live by faith, when it adheres to God in this manner continually, and without interruption, its whole life being then with respect to him one continued act of faith. But this act, however simple and perfect, is not faith: for the nature and essence of faith is God working in and illuminating the fund or centre of the soul which desires him, and gives up itself un-

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to him \*. It is not the action of the creature, but the action of God in a creature so disposed, that operates the wonderful things which in scripture are ascribed to faith. Thus St Paul prays for the Ephe-

\* To beings capable of enjoying God, and created for that end, "the substance of things hoped for" can be no other than the Divine Light or Word in the centre of the soul, acting in conformity to the state of the creature. To those who have not fallen, or, having fallen, are restored after the proper purification, this action is enjoyment, or the kingdom of heaven. To beings in such a state as ours, it will at first be so hid as often not to be perceived; and when perceived, is what we call *conscience*. But when the creature turns to God, and sincerely desires to give up its will to him, by thus corresponding with the Divine Light, it is in a manner passive under the hand of God; and then the action is faith; which growing daily more and more perfect, discovers to the soul that God is working in it, and so becomes "the evidence of things not seen:" and while the creature continues in this state, all its acts are acts of faith; faith is the root of them, or it acts by faith. By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, and was declared just; and so of the rest mentioned in that chapter.

In this sense of the word *faith* (and in no other) it answers to the definition given by St Paul: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Some passages of scripture indeed there are which seem to fix it to believing; but why then was the offering of Cain rejected? Surely Cain believed: and numberless texts might be adduced to shew that faith and believing are not the same.

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fians, [chap. iii. 16. 17. 18. 19.], "That  
 " God would grant them, according to  
 " the riches of his glory, to be strengthen-  
 " ed with might by his Spirit in the in-  
 " ner man; that Christ might dwell in  
 " their hearts by faith; that they, being  
 " rooted and grounded in love, might be  
 " able to comprehend with all saints,  
 " what is the breadth, and length, and  
 " depth, and height; and to know the  
 " love of Christ, which passeth knowledge,  
 " that they might be filled with all the  
 " fulness of God."

The false and dark notions commonly entertained concerning faith, have arisen from the superinductions occasioned by sin. For the mind having become dark, perverse, wandering, dull, and earthly, faith, though no wise changed as to its essence, came to have some accidental things annexed, such as the outward signs, words, commands, and revelations mentioned before, in order to engage a direct attention to the inward operations of God. But while God makes use of these to affect the mind, he darts at the same time the rays of his own Eternal Light into it; and if it be so touched with the outward

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helps as to give attention, and convert itself, it is immediately moved and enlightened with a divine spark or ray, by which these very helps or means are made more efficacious and saving, and so assist more and more in removing impediments, and disposing the mind to be wholly filled and irradiated with the pure light of faith. Thus they mutually assist and promote one another as it were by turns; but must by no means be confounded together, for that would lead into Judaism. True light and peace are the properties or the effects of faith, but these means and helps do of themselves give neither: nor can they be given but by God, who is the only source of true light and happiness to the mind.

Against this explanation perhaps it will be objected, That faith being to cease in the next life, it must be something else than the operation of God in a soul rightly disposed; which, instead of ceasing, will then be more perfect. I answer, It will be more perfect, and for that very cause ceases to be faith. That kind of divine operation which is suited to the state of man in this life, where he sees only "as through a glass darkly," meeting  
with



with a due correspondence on his part, such a correspondence as he is capable of, that, I say, is faith; and that divine operation which is suited to his state in the next life, when he “shall see face to face, “shall see as he is seen, and know as he “is known,” being something very different, is therefore not faith.

Such then being the nature and essence of faith, it may subsist and operate independent of outward means, even in a Heathen who knows not the law, but nevertheless “worketh good,” and hath “the “circumcision of the heart in the Spirit.” God, the Word, is, in scripture, called *the true light*, “which enlightens every man “that cometh into the world.” This light I take to be the light of nature, or of conscience, “bearing witness, and accusing or excusing;” and can hardly doubt, that, when it meets with correspondence, it is true living faith, since it is written, “The “just shall live by faith;” and in another place, “glory, honour, peace, and immortality, to every one that worketh good, “to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile,” [Rom. ii. 10.] ; and [ver. 14. 15.] : “For “when the Gentiles which have not the  
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“ law, do by nature the things contained  
“ in the law, these, having not the law,  
“ are a law unto themselves : which shew  
“ the work of the law written in their  
“ hearts, their conscience also bearing wit-  
“ nefs, and their thoughts the mean while  
“ accusing or else excusing one another.”

— Again, [chap. i. 16. 17.], “ The gospel  
“ of Christ is the power of God unto sal-  
“ vation, to every one that believeth, to  
“ the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.  
“ For therein is the righteousness of God  
“ revealed from faith to faith.”

Now, the inference to be drawn from these passages compared, is plainly this : That the Gentiles, though without the law, and outward revelation, were not altogether destitute of faith ; but that the gospel was a new manifestation of the righteousness of God, suited to the present darkness and needs of mankind, and fit and capable, not only to support and maintain the true natural light, but likewise to advance or extend it infinitely.

But though the true light which enlightens every man that cometh into the world, is a principle of infinite life and activity, it may subsist in the soul like an  
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exotic plant, whose tender shoots, almost as soon as they appear, are stifled by pernicious weeds, now the natural product of the soil, or blasted by the inclemency of air. Wherefore a due correspondence is necessary on our part, to make it act with the life and energy which is natural to it, and so to diffuse itself as to influence our thoughts and actions. Then it is that we have true faith, such a faith as comes fully up to the apostle's definition, and is "the evidence of things not seen," as well as "the substance of things hoped for;" by its admirable effects discovering to the soul that it is not forsaken, and so becoming, as it were, a pledge in its own hand of the continuance of God's love to it, and of the performance of all his promises. And it is when faith is in this state, that the soul abandons itself wholly to God, resting upon him with easiness and tranquillity; believing what he has been pleased to reveal, and in all things practising a blind implicit obedience to his will. Thus it believes, and thus it acts, leaving the event to God; and so strong, so absolute is its resignation, and its confidence in him, that it were impossible for men or angels

angels to make it hesitate a moment, or change its conduct \*. It is then, and not till then, that propriety is directly attacked, which is truly a seed of death and hell in every child of Adam. The poison which it had spread through the soul, is by degrees expelled, and every drop of

\* It is this admirable disposition, the first and constant effect of true faith, which being considered as a virtue belonging to man, is in the scripture classed with hope and charity, and often mentioned under the name of *faith*, in contradistinction from that rational belief which is only superficial, and without works. Whether the effect or the cause be more properly expressed by the word *faith*, in the grammatical sense of it, is hardly worth our notice; since we have from St Paul a formal definition which we think will only agree to the cause, and are supported in this opinion by the best writers. To put the word *sin* for a *sin-offering*, or *offering for sin*, would be thought an improper way of speaking; yet it is common in the Old Testament, and was familiar to the Jews. To put the word *faith* for the divine light dwelling in the heart of man, meeting with correspondence on his part, and so producing that resignation and confidence which, perhaps, in strictness of speech, should only be called *faith*, may have been as familiar to the apostles, and those to whom they wrote: and quotations might be given from Philo, and others, which would shew it is somewhat more than a *may-be*, that among the Jews and first Christians, *faith* bore a meaning very different from what the followers of Calvin and Jansenius have, with too much success, endeavoured to fix upon it; a meaning which agrees with the explanation given here, and leads to it.

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corruption pressed out; its roots and fibres are cut or torn away, and all the passages stopped by which it can receive nourishment. Thus it withers, languishes, and dies; and faith every where insinuates itself in the place of this baneful weed.

In this flourishing state, faith, or the kingdom of God in the soul, is compared by our Saviour [Matth. xiii. 33.] to leaven hid in three measures of meal until the whole is leavened; thereby intimating, that its operations never cease until the whole man be made one with it, and consequently with God; which is the consummation of all, and what he prayed for in the garden:—"Father, let them be one, as we are one."

From the little which I have here taken upon me to write of faith, you will easily observe that it is by it we are justified; (made righteous, or just), though a great deal must be done and suffered on our part. Nor need we be surpris'd with the difficulties we shall meet with in the spiritual life, or expect that a weed so deeply rooted can be easily pulled away, or the poison it has spread through the soul carried off at once. But though it is a work  
of



of time and labour, we have no reason to be discouraged : God is with us ; and if we do our best, our labour shall not be in vain. And in this work, besides the immediate assistance we are to expect from him, he has put it in our power to make a very profitable use of that desire of happiness which is natural to every one. He has again and again promised rewards and threatened punishments : he has set before us eternal happiness on the one hand, and misery on the other ; that while our faith is too weak to influence our conduct, we may be engaged for our own sake, to endeavour the rooting out of propriety, and to observe the precepts of religion, which are all contrived for that purpose. And indeed this method was absolutely necessary, these being the only incitements that can have weight, so long as we have no better principle than interest to drive us on ; and while we are in this state, we do well to think often upon them, in order to awaken our hopes and fears. But as faith grows strong, they diminish by degrees ; at least we are not so sensibly affected by them ; we endeavour to obey and love God, not so much because it is our interest,

est, as because he wills it; and both hopes and fears, in so far as they regard ourselves\*, are at last entirely swallowed up in the immense ocean of charity. Then is the victory obtained, and we have peace and tranquillity within, instead of tumult and disorder.

\* There are two kinds of hope very different, as the principles are different from which they proceed. The one regards self only, and so is from propriety, or at best no more than a natural effect of the good-will we bear to ourselves. Thus, when we hope for the enjoyment of God, and the blessings promised to those who do his will, our own happiness is the point in view, and consequently the object of our hope. The other kind being from faith, is truly divine, regarding self no otherwise than as a creature in whom God "desires to take delight." Whoever then is endued with this divine virtue, hopes that his offences shall be forgiven, and his heart so purified, that God may dwell in it with complacency; not doubting to receive such assistance from heaven as will enable him to perform what on his part may be necessary for that end. And it is this hope pointing directly upon God, and having his will and pleasure for its sole object, it is this hope, I say, which, in the catalogue of virtues, St Paul has ranked with faith and charity, giving it the middle place. — Faith is sometimes compared to a tree: — Hope will be the blossom, and Charity the fruit.

## S E C T. II.

1. *Two pernicious errors concerning grace.*
2. *Of sin. The forgiveness of it universal, but not sufficient to salvation without a change in the heart. Prayer necessary towards operating that change. The nature of prayer.*
3. *Of the moral sense considered as that by which men are capable of gratitude, or love under the influence of propriety; and the use that may be made of it.*

I. **T**O go through all the mistakes which men have fallen into with respect to religion, were an endless labour; nor is it needful: they take their rise from propriety, and will fall with it. Yet two there are which deserve to be particularly mentioned; both concerning grace, and directly contrary to one another.

It was in the fifth century that Pelagius published his errors. He maintained, That the fall had no consequence but to bring on a degeneracy; that man, free to chuse betwixt good and evil, is able of himself to work out his salvation without  
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any assistance from God ; that the inward operation of the Holy Spirit, or grace, is unnecessary, and therefore not to be expected or desired. St Augustin, having a just abhorrence of opinions so contrary to truth, so detrimental to religion, and dangerous to mankind, attacks them with a warmth natural to him when he thought the honour of God was concerned ; and it is generally allowed, that, in this dispute, it carried him to an excess on the other side. He shews the weakness of man ; but shews it in such a light as would make grace not only necessary, but irresistible : yet, against the Manicheans, and elsewhere, he builds often upon a different system, altogether opposite to consequences that might be drawn from the unguarded expressions which dropped from him on this occasion. If grace be irresistible, liberty is nothing ; and if all are not saved, the reason is obvious ; all are not chosen. And indeed, they who maintain eternal decrees of election and reprobation, have not omitted to make use of so great a name as St Augustin, to give a sort of authority to so strange a doctrine.

It was taken up by Calvin and his fol-  
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lowers,

lowers, at a time when every one took the liberty to assert what they pleased; and they who asserted the newest things, were by some thought the best reformers. There were two reasons for its being so easily received. The Papists talked much, indeed too much, of *works*, and of *merit*; and many fancied they could never be far enough from them. Besides, self-love found its account greatly in this system: for, according to it, heaven was to be got without trouble, or not at all; and, with people of a certain turn of mind, to separate from a corrupted church would pass for a mark of election. Thus religion was made to consist in faith alone. But what sort of faith? The Superlapfarians say, A believing that Jesus Christ died, not for all, but only for the elect; that his merits are imputed to them, and by virtue of that imputation, they are heirs of the kingdom of heaven; while the rest of mankind are by an eternal decree devoted to destruction. The Sublapfarians, willing to soften it in appearance, have, instead of eternal decrees of reprobation, chosen to call it *preterition*. “There was no decree (say they) ordaining the fall: Adam

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“dam was free to stand; but all having  
“fallen in him, God might justly have  
“let all perish; and his redeeming a few,  
“gives no ground of complaint to those  
“who are passed by; they would have  
“been no less miserable though there had  
“been no redemption.” Now, if all could  
be saved, is it not the same to pass by or  
to reprobate? But having said elsewhere  
\* what I think sufficient for shewing the  
absurdity of these opinions considered with  
regard to the justice and goodness of God,  
I will here only take notice of the influ-  
ence they have with regard to practice;  
and it is a wonder they have not more.  
It is lucky in some cases that people do not  
act, or even believe, consequentially to  
their principles.

Let reprobation and the irresistibility of  
grace, in whatever shape it is put, be sup-  
posed to be true, and a few of the most  
obvious inferences made, it will be evi-  
dent, that all endeavours to be moral or  
religious, all sort of prayer, and, in short,  
every thing that has respect to another  
life, is labour in vain. They who are e-  
lected to salvation will infallibly be saved,

\* See the seven last paragraphs of sect. i. 2. part 1.

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though they take no thought about it; the means are ordained as well as the end; and if grace is to be given, it will be irresistible. They, on the other hand, who are appointed to perdition, can make no change in their lot; the irreversible decree is gone out, and perish they must. The rewards so often promised in scripture as incitements to do well, and the punishments threatened to those who do not, are only to amuse us. The elect must do well, and their place is marked in heaven; the rest cannot, and their punishment is certain: for though life and death are set before us, and we are bid chuse which we will, our choice is determined by a fatal necessity we have no power to alter. Thus we have only to give loose reins to our passions, our desires, and inclinations: without grace all our care is to no purpose; and if grace is to be given, it will be powerful enough to restrain them, or we shall be saved though they be not restrained. I say not, that all who believe predestination act in this manner, I hope they do not; yea I am persuaded there are good people among them, who do their best: but if they are to act according  
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to their principles, this surely is the rational way; and I fear many who are thought to be very devout, are not far from it.

They have a general maxim, That works are of no value: "We are justified by faith;" which (as they explain it) is a firm belief that we are of the number of those to whom the merits of Jesus Christ are to be imputed. To acquire this, is the great work of religion: it is for this they pray; for this they hear sermons, and go to sacraments. And when, by working upon the imagination, they have got themselves persuaded that they are of the elect, (which with some is no hard matter), they have then what they call *assurance of salvation*, and easiness during the rest of their life. They commonly abstain from gross immoralities, such as are scandalous and shameful in the eye of the world; but as for other things, they are thought consistent enough with a state of grace, and therefore but little minded. Now religion being put on this footing, is it not plain, that all the prayers and observances, even of the most serious, serve no end but to satisfy curiosity? Their anxiety to know their fate, makes it neither better nor worse;

worse; it was determined long before: and they themselves acknowledge, that many are elected to salvation, who pass their lives without ever thinking about it; their faith perhaps is not given till the very moment of death, and it is as effectual then as if they had it from the cradle.

How agreeable soever it may be to fancy one's self a favourite of heaven; and that, after enjoying the good things of the earth, or as great a share of them as we can procure; after passing our lives in a constant pursuit of worldly pleasures, without ever denying ourselves in any one, or refusing to corrupt nature the smallest of its demands; we are secure of eternal happiness, and shall be set down with those who, as our Saviour commanded, have denied themselves, have taken up their cross, and followed him: I say, how agreeable soever these things may be, it were impossible to fall in with such a scheme of religion, if people did not grossly mistake the nature of sin, as well as of faith; and indeed of every thing that makes the state of a creature good or bad. It is "by faith" we are justified, as the Apostle tells us: but what  
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he understands by it, is not a fancy of the imagination, or whim of our conceiving; he himself has fixed its meanings in that short, but admirable, definition, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." But having in the former section explained it in a way which I think agreeable to the scripture, though perhaps different from some opinions commonly enough entertained concerning it, I shall only observe now, that every one whose faith is such as I have there described, will infallibly be justified. Nor need we scruple to affirm that it alone is true faith; whatever else is called faith being, with regard to justification, entirely false: and they who expect to be justified by any other, are in the state of those mentioned by St Paul, who "have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof."

By that explanation of faith it will be easy to discover what is meant by "dead works," and "the works of the law," so often mentioned in scripture, particularly by St Paul, as of no value: and we will not be startled with seeing that apostle make use of the strongest terms to exalt faith, and to shew the insignificancy of



works which do not proceed from it. As to other works, they can never be set in opposition to faith, or considered by themselves; it is the cause of them, and they are the necessary and constant effects of it: but if we observe the commandments of God, as we would obey the laws of a tyrant, from a servile dread of punishment or expectation of gain, our obedience will make no change in the disposition of our hearts; we continue slaves to sin notwithstanding our works, and therefore unfit to receive the recompence of children.

But how dangerous soever it may be to mistake the nature of faith, and so to apply what is said of it in scripture to a wild imagination of our own, resting at the same time upon an irresistibility of grace, and fantastical decrees of election; I say, how dangerous soever an error of this kind may be, let us beware of falling into the other extreme, or of saying, with Pelagius, that man has within himself all that is necessary for working out his salvation, and therefore has no occasion for grace, or any assistance from God. What a horrid fund of pride must one have before he is capable to think in this manner! and how deeply

deeply ignorant must he be of his own state! He who thought so first, and was bold enough to publish his opinion, did well to affirm that the fall was not great; a disorder had need be very small which man was to rectify by his own strength: but one must have poor notions of an innocent righteous state, who can look into himself, and fancy he wants but little of being innocent and righteous.

Of all the errors which have ever been hatched, this of Pelagius is most contrary to true religion. Instead of humility, and diffidence of ourselves, it fills the mind with arrogance and presumption; and secures the possession of these valuable qualities, and indeed of every particle of corruption brought upon human nature by sin. It secures, I say; all this, by cutting off our commerce with God, making men rely upon their own strength for deliverance: for though our Saviour has commanded to pray without ceasing, and has said, "Ask, and it shall be given," it teaches, that all prayer is unnecessary, yea sinful, unless it be reckoned no sin to make a mock of God, by asking what we neither hope to receive, nor think we need.

This single instance, out of many which might be given, will shew how contrary it is to revealed religion; and as no person has yet offered a system of natural religion; of which prayer for such assistance to perform our duty, as implies all that is meant by grace, is not made an essential part, I shall dispense with myself from multiplying words to confute an opinion which so plainly contradicts, not only revelation, but even the common or general sense of mankind, that whoever suffers himself to fall into it, may be looked on as willing to be deceived.

Let us then acknowledge our insufficiency, and with a humble confidence expose our hearts to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, that by grace we may be enabled to perform what is necessary on our part for enlivening our faith: and let us not rely upon works which proceed not from it; that is, from the faith which, by way of eminence, may be called *true*; for there is no other by which we shall be justified.

That faith by which we believe the existence of God, and whatever he has been pleased to reveal to mankind, when it comes

comes only from a right exercise of reason, after inquiring into the proofs upon which a rational belief is founded, has reached no farther than the understanding: and even when we rely upon the judgement of others, from an unwillingness to take the trouble of inquiring, or an incapacity of doing it, though it may be called a sort of implicit faith, it is reason still that determines our belief; we think there is no ground to doubt of what has been received as true by persons capable to judge, and who had no temptation to deceive us. This faith we may have, and yet continue in sin; ("the devils believe, and tremble"); for the spirit can only be touched by what comes from God; and while it remains the same, there is no change in our state with respect to salvation. But because the inferior faculties (I mean the faculties of the soul, considered as distinct from those of the spirit), are often affected by it, and our hopes and fears awakened, it may come to be very useful in determining us to correspond with the Divine Light, and may thus be a mean leading to true faith. It happens however sometimes, that when the imagination

nation is strong, our hopes and fears rise to an excessive height, according as we think often of rewards or punishments; and when these meet with wrong notions of God, and of the way in which he acts upon his creatures, they commonly end in assurance of salvation or absolute despair. Thus we shall hear people, as their fancy works, talking of an inward feeling of grace, and the sweetness of faith; or crying out they are hardened by God, and reprobated. To be sure none of those states are good; but it is more than possible that the second may not be the worst.

Others again, seeing the absurdity of acting or believing after this manner, conclude, too hastily, that there is no such thing as a spiritual intercourse betwixt God and man. "All that is necessary to be known is contained in the scriptures: and we have reason to direct us in performing what is required." Inspiration, according to them, is ceased, because no new doctrine is to be revealed; as if the gifts of prophecy, of miracles, and of preaching, were the only gifts God could bestow upon his creatures. But they know  
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of nothing higher than reason, and will have no faith that does not come from it : which, with respect to life, is the same as if a person who was to begin a voyage, should refuse to have the needle of the compass touched with the loadstone, intending to turn it to the north with his hand, as often as the direction was changed by the course of the ship. If, on the contrary, one should believe the needle to be touched when it is not, its motions, though they are all but accidental, will be considered as coming from the impression of the loadstone : and this is the case of those who mistake their own imaginations for faith.

II. A misunderstanding of the nature of sin is, I believe, a great part of the cause that people fall so easily into these, as well as other, mistakes in religion. They consider it as an offence against God, but have no thought of the change it makes in the mind. Thus salvation is supposed to be a consequence of a judicial act, by which the trespass is pardoned, in the same manner as kings and princes pardon the crimes of their subjects. According

ding to some, it is a free and absolute act of grace, without any condition whatsoever; but then it is restricted to such and such particular persons: with others, it is universal; certain things however are required, and the performance of them is the condition upon which it is granted; but that being done, every one is equally intitled to the benefit of it.

The forgiveness of sin is absolute and universal, without condition or restriction; it was merited for us by Jesus Christ, and for his sake is granted to all that ask it: grace is now as freely offered as if sin had never been committed; and if our spiritual faculties were as capable to receive the divine communications, we would have the same intercourse with God as Adam had before the fall. ~~The~~ guilt of sin is washed away in the blood of Christ, but the disorder it has brought upon the mind continues; and till that is removed it is impossible we can be happy. If, for example, drunkenness was to be punished with death, though the crime were pardoned, death might still be the consequence, if the blood was so heated as to bring on a fever: and though there was

was a physician who could infallibly cure that disease, if the patient refused to submit to his management, we would not be surpris'd to see him die notwithstanding his pardon. And if you will suppose farther, that a fever is unavoidable after drunkenness, and it again incurable without the help of the physician ; you will see how the pardon of sin is consistent with the necessity of going through a state of purification, and of submitting to whatever is prescribed by the great physician of our souls ; otherwise the spiritual death is unavoidable, not as the punishment of a fault, but a natural effect of the disorder occasioned by sin. Thus if we would be saved, we must resolve to observe the rules laid down to us by our Saviour. He has shewn us the way to life. It is indeed narrow, and the gate is strait ; but if we press forward, we are sure of the prize : and he who has said, " Deny yourselves, " take up your cross, and follow me," has said also, " My yoke is easy, and my burden light."

Fear not then to apply in good earnest to the practice of religion : what is difficult, yea impossible, with men, is not so

with God. And do not put it off from one time to another: the present is the proper season; and the loss of a day may be of the worst consequence, for you are not sure of the next. Besides, the difficulties not only remain, but will always become greater: every day of an irreligious life gives new strength to the disease; and the poison which at first might have been thrown out gently, grows too strong to be expelled without a convulsion of the whole soul, which few, very few have courage enough to bear; and so, after many years, they drop into the grave in the midst of their vain and fruitless resolutions.

People are sometimes unwilling to know their own weakness: the blame is thrown upon the state of life they are engaged in; and they believe themselves good and virtuous, because they think they would be so in other circumstances. Small excuses are accepted of from a friend, and we cannot find in our hearts to be long angry with ourselves. Let us do all we can in the state in which providence has placed us: let us carefully perform the duties of it, and bear its crosses with patience;

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let no opportunity be omitted of doing good: and let all be done with an upright intention; and a sincere desire to please God. This is the true virtue, and every state is capable of it.

But you must not imagine we can do these things by our own strength: had we nothing else to depend upon, our case were indeed deplorable. It is true we know our duty; and reason will tell us we ought to perform it: but, alas! what is reason! how weak its influence! and how easily is it hoodwinked! We must therefore lift up our eyes unto God, "from him cometh our help:" and we may do it with confidence; for he will not forsake those who trust in him. Yea he has promised to hear their petitions who ask in his Son's name: we are even commanded to ask, and assured that we shall receive; and if we knock, that it shall be opened unto us. But that we may not be ignorant of the right way of asking, we are likewise commanded to "pray without ceasing." It is by prayer we become proper objects of the divine mercy, and acquire the necessary dispositions for receiving the grace which Jesus Christ has



merited for us: and it is a duty so indispensable, that the whole progress of the soul towards God depends upon it; with it we are secure of success, without it an easy prey to the weakest of our enemies.

But whoever would confine his prayer to some verbal petitions, whether put in order by himself or others, or even to certain stated times set apart for devotion, would make small advances in religion. This kind of prayer is always good and necessary, and perhaps all that is to be expected in the beginning; but does not come up to that which is required in the scripture: a more perfect prayer must be meant, a prayer which is not interrupted by the necessary cares of life, or the duties of society, else it were impossible to “pray without ceasing.” I know it is commonly thought so, and is therefore supposed to mean only that we should pray often, or much: but the precept is plain; and when the nature of prayer is rightly understood, does not need to be softened.

If one should write down all his wants, and every thing in which he desires the divine assistance, beginning or ending with

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a prayer formed in the best manner, and then retire to read this over, or to repeat it from his memory, in the humblest posture, but without minding how his thoughts were employed, being sure that nothing was forgot, and the expressions all weighed with the greatest exactness; while another, instead of a way in which the heart has no part, without other preparation than a deep sense of the divine goodness, and of his own indigence, presents himself before God, vile in his own eyes, but trusting to the mercy which is promised through Jesus Christ; and being sure that all his wants are known, and hoping that God will bring him out of his misery by such means as will be most effectual, firmly resolves to consider all the dispensations of providence in this view, and without making a choice for himself, to submit his will in all things to the will of God, accepting as such of every thing that happens to him; and that he may be able to perform his resolution, keeps himself in the presence of God with his heart exposed to the divine influences, and ready to receive such graces as it shall please God to give: if two persons, I say, should

should present themselves before God in ways so different, every one must see which of them had made the best prayer; yet this last may be made at all times, and in all places \*. Whatever way we be outwardly employed, the mind cannot be so taken up but that our thoughts may be often directed towards God: and when one has been for some time accustomed to a right method of prayer, as soon as he considers himself in the presence of God, without any reasoning or formal reflections upon the infinite disproportion betwixt a creature and the creator, he will see his own nothingness; and a lively faith will at the same time prevent his doubting of the divine assistance.

Now, as prayer consists not in words, nor in the posture of the body, but in the dispositions which I have mentioned, while they last, if it was but for a moment, that moment is spent in prayer: and when the mind comes to be so fixed in them, that, notwithstanding our necessary commerce with the world, the will remains united unto God, though, because of human

\* This kind of prayer the French call *oraison*, the other *priere*. We have but one word for both.

frailty,

frailty, the attention cannot be always the same; then we pray as we ought to pray, and "without ceasing." And

This state of continual prayer, implying such a union with God as is proportioned to this life, is so far from being imaginary or enthusiastic, that it is impossible we can have true rest or peace in any other. For such is the nature of man, that so long as the will is not wholly united to God, every state must be a state of violence; and how hard soever he may strain for happiness, his projects will be unsuccessful: all they can reach to is some alleviation of misery; and even that must fail as soon as the present scene is closed. A vehement unextinguishable desire of God, which is the ground, essence, or first principle in every intelligent being, makes it impossible for them to be satisfied with any thing but him; and is in angels and men the true, eternal, and only source of happiness or misery.

The angels who kept their station, being united to the object of this desire, have never felt the anguish of its being unsatisfied; but, on the contrary, have fulness of joy, always desiring and loving, and  
always

always enjoying what they desire and love. Men are separated from the object of their desire by the wall of partition which sin has made betwixt God and them, but being stupefied by the body, have not yet felt the anguish of being unsatisfied; as soon however as death puts an end to the stupefaction, they must feel it, all but those who employ themselves here in such a way as will qualify them for being united to God. Life is the valuable time allowed us to prepare for happiness; and they who will not use it for that purpose, ought to expect the worst; but others, who are willing to bestow their labour, are sure to succeed. We can lift up our hearts, as well as our eyes, to heaven, and in doing so may depend on being assisted by him who is almighty. I say, we can lift up our hearts, as well as our eyes, to heaven: for though we do not love God "with all our heart," we are not so deeply sunk in propriety as not to love him at all; we have at least a sense of gratitude towards him as our benefactor, and gratitude is love. It is not indeed a love so strong as would make us go great lengths in self-denial, if we had no other motives than to please God: but it



is love; and every one is capable of it, some more, some less, but all in some degree or other; that is, every one has a sense of moral beauty, but too weak in a natural state, or too much intangled with propriety not to be influenced by it. Yet, weak and intangled as it is, it seems to be all that the divine goodness has to work upon; and (perhaps) the differencing character betwixt a fallen creature and one irrecoverably lost: for as our love to God cannot be such as to qualify us for that union which is a state of continual prayer in this life, and of enjoyment in the next, until this sense be wholly disengaged from every weight and incumbrance; on the other hand, I think, while it is not quite extinguished, no creature can be so absolutely, so incorrigibly wicked, but that there may be hope. One thing is certain, that it may be made a most effectual mean of advancing towards God, by using it in a right way; whereas a contrary management will ever be attended with the greatest danger. And this is what I propose to shew you in the next article; where, in treating of the moral sense, I shall principally keep in view the advantage of using

it right, and the dismal consequences of purchasing a false quiet by a conduct which must weaken, and even extinguish it, if that be possible.

III. THERE is a sense of beauty well known by the name of *taste*, which we see by experience may be greatly improved, even to such a delicacy as to become a very considerable source of pleasure; yet when neglected, it appears but just enough to shew, that in every human creature there is such a thing. Two pieces of painting, the one done by the greatest master, the other by a common hand, shall be looked on with equal coolness; the colouring, or variety of figures, may give a little pleasure, and that is all: another, perhaps the same person, after exercising his taste in a right method, no sooner casts his eye on the first, but he perceives a world of beauties, observes the exact imitation of nature in expressing the passions, and is charmed into a sort of rapture with the symmetry of the whole, commonly ending his reflections in admiring the genius of the painter: while a third, having some how or other made his taste worse than nature gave it,

it, overlooks the finest pieces of Rubens or Raphael, but is hugely delighted with the daubing on a sign-post, because it glares with red and yellow, and hangs in a gilded frame. Instances of this kind might be taken from music, sculpture, and architecture, and from every thing in which harmony and proportion have place; and these observations will hold when applied to objects capable of moral beauty, the sense of which may be called a taste, and may be improved or vitiated by a right management or a wrong.

Let us suppose then three sorts of this inward perception or sense of moral beauty: the first shall be that which answers best to the bulk of mankind, and may be called *natural*; the second, *improved*, taking in the degrees upward until it become perfect; the third, *vitiated*, including the degrees downward to a total extinction. The qualities which constitute the character of a perfect being, and the different degrees of them, will be the object of this sense: but to avoid confusion, I shall consider the three principal ones as comprehending all the rest, viz. power, wisdom, and goodness; and endeavour to

give a just representation of the manner in which men are affected towards a being whose works or actions discover that it has those qualities; beginning with that class, whose moral sense, in the division already made, I have called *natural*.

Power alone will by no means make a lovely character; and though under the direction of wisdom, if that principle is wanting which determines a being to exercise its power for the good of others, we may admire and fear, but cannot love. Thus, in contemplating the works of God, those works I mean which make the material inanimate part of the creation, numberless worlds present themselves to the eye; and we see every where admirable demonstrations of power and wisdom. But let us fancy that these worlds are not peopled with intelligent beings, nor any way intended for their use, and there will be nothing to excite our love; while this globe of earth, though but a point in respect of the universe, being considered as the habitation of men, gives a lovely picture of the infinite being, by adding the idea of goodness to that of wisdom and power. The picture however is not yet complete;

complete; we must go on with our reflections, and look upon this infinite being as continually exercising his power and wisdom to advance the happiness of his creatures. It is this providential care, this universal uninterrupted benevolence, which, so to speak, gives the finishing stroke, and offers to the mind a clear and distinct idea of perfect beauty.

And now one would think there needed no more to kindle the flame of love; but experience shews the contrary. The understanding indeed is touched, but the understanding and the heart are very different. One may reason finely of love, may see the strength of his own reasoning, and feel nothing. Such is the prevalence of self-love, and the corruption which sin has brought upon human nature, that infinite goodness may have no charms, but when the effects of it are falling directly or indirectly upon ourselves; this is the point of view in which we perceive its beauty. Mean time, whatever it be that makes us perceive it, it is the beauty itself that causes love; and it will continue so long as this perception lasts, though the consequences with respect to interest were bad.

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This, so far as I can judge, is now the natural state of the moral sense; and I think an impartial examination, such as every one may make for himself, into the source of those sentiments of gratitude commonly felt towards our benefactors, when we suppose them to act from a principle of benevolence, will shew that I am not mistaken \*. Let us consider next how

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\* A creature purely selfish would receive the greatest benefits without love, without thankfulness, or any sensation whatsoever that does not terminate upon itself. It sees no beauty in this principle of goodness which makes its benefactor bestow favours upon it; and if a quite contrary principle could have the same effect, it would be just as well pleased. Reflect on the indifference with which you would receive favours from a person who does good accidentally, or from any principle that you are sure has no mixture of benevolence, and you will have some notion of the way in which a creature purely selfish would be affected towards God, when he were heaping his benefits upon it. On the other hand, you will find that one capable of gratitude, even in the lowest degree, has at bottom a real perception of moral beauty, though self-love may so predomine, that this beauty shall pass unregarded, if interest does not fix the attention; but that being once done, the faculty by which we perceive a beauty in goodness, acts independent of interest, and always produces love. And this love is properly disinterested; as indeed all love must be; it is the love of goodness for its own sake: but as it was interest that fixed the attention so as to give the faculty by which we perceive

it may be spoilt with bad management, and observe the consequences.

To be happy is the project of mankind, but for the most part miserably carried on; and as they only understand their true interest who are really influenced by religion, it is no wonder to see others pursuing happiness by ways that will never lead to it. When one looks no farther than the present life, and thinks of no happiness that is not to be met with here, it must be a part of his plan to stifle every sentiment which may disturb him in prosecuting what he takes to be his interest, and in tasting with satisfaction pleasures he has already at hand, or hopes to reap in due time as the fruit of his labour. Whatever he feels within himself contrary to the favourite inclination, must be stupefied or extinguished, else he can neither seek, nor enjoy with tranquillity, the things which he looks upon as necessary to establish a solid happiness. If covetousness

perceive a beauty in goodness liberty to act, it may in some sense be considered as the cause of our love; for had the effects of this goodness fallen upon any other, its beauty had been overlooked. This precisely is what we call *gratitude*.

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puts him upon acquiring riches, it will be impossible to go heartily to work, so long as justice, benevolence, gratitude, or compassion, oblige him sometimes to diminish his store, at other times to omit opportunities of increasing it, or torment him with bitter reflections upon his own conduct; and while he perceives a beauty in virtue, and deformity in vice, it will be as little in his power to wallow in luxury and debauch without such horrid convulsions of mind as will do more than balance all the pleasures of a sensual life. Nor will it be easier to execute those projects in which his pride may engage him; the methods of attaining such a degree of elevation as will satisfy an ambitious man, being as incompatible with justice, benevolence, gratitude, and compassion, as those of acquiring riches, and no less inconsistent with virtue than the greatest sensuality. All notions therefore of moral beauty must be extinguished, or brought so very low as not to intrude themselves when he has occasion for sentiments of a quite different kind; and every thought that men are under any obligation to be virtuous, must be carefully avoided, that he may view himself

himself without horror, though always coming nearer and nearer to the state of a devil or a beast.

While he is going on with this glorious design, as often as qualms return, and return they will, a wrong education must account for them; and he fancies, or endeavours to fancy it the part of a reasonable man, to get rid of them as fast as possible, lest at any time he should be fooled out of his interest, and stopped in his career to happiness. If he observes in others any thing that has the appearance of goodness, it is looked upon as mere grimace, such as he himself can easily put on when it serves his purpose. Even the Deity is supposed to act purely from interest, getting and expecting sufficient returns in glory for the benefits bestowed upon his creatures. Having thus, in his own conceit, taken away the foundation of virtue, and all incitements to love or gratitude, self is set on the throne of God; and the moral sense seals with its approbation a decree like Nebuchadnezzar's, that all the nations of the earth fall down and worship "the golden image."

I do not suppose that by nature men are

so completely wicked as to resolve deliberately on rooting out the seeds of virtue which yet remain in the soul; they must be almost destroyed before such a thought can enter; but I dare say, that, upon a strict examination, every one who does not regulate his life according to the precepts of religion, will find himself advancing towards this wretched state; and will discover, that he has been endeavouring, I fear not unsuccessfully, to bring his sentiments to agree with his practice. He may be satisfied concerning this, by reflecting, whether he has contradicted the laws of religion and virtue, and been able to live in peace; for such is the nature of self-love, (not to mention here the stings of a bad conscience), that it will not suffer us to be easy if we perceive, or rather feel, that we are not what we ought to be. The deception, however, cannot continue long: a time will come when we must see ourselves as we really are; see ourselves stripped of all false ornaments, of all the tinsel and varnish with which we endeavour to hide our deformity from our own eyes, and the eyes of others. Then will every being act, and be acted upon, according



to its nature, and the state it is in, and reap in another life what it has sown in this. In all, whose moral sense is vitiated, the impressions of true beauty will raise aversion and pain, and stir up hatred against beings who possess those amiable qualities which they neither have, nor hope to acquire: and if their hatred bears a proportion to the degrees of perfection which they observe in other beings, infinite perfection will stir up infinite hatred, or as great as they are capable of; and (to use the words of scripture) make them "call upon the mountains to cover them."

It were to be wished that people would sometimes fix their thoughts on this subject, melancholy as it is; but as it will be done with more profit by attending to what rises in your own breasts, than to reflections made to your hand, however moving they might appear, I shall go on to observe what advances may be made towards the perfection of our nature, by cultivating the moral sense in the way human weakness will permit.

One that knows where his true interest lies, and is reasonable enough to pursue it, (for I shall not suppose him to take his

aim higher at first), will be glad to find the way to happiness pointed out by something within himself, and that he is not only able, but even forced, to judge on every important occasion, if he be going forward, or mistaking his course. His ideas of moral beauty, by discovering, whether he will or will not, the qualities and dispositions he ought to have, put it out of his power to be ignorant, that the want of these is precisely that which hinders him from being happy: and as he sees how useful it is for his main design, to have the difference represented betwixt what he is, and what he ought to be, those ideas which he looks upon as so many faithful monitors, are carefully improved; and he has the pleasure to observe them growing daily more and more exact. Experience, however, teaches him by degrees, that, with all this refinement of speculation, the natural corruption may subsist; and that there must be another way to acquire the necessary qualifications for happiness, than by rooting out every vice, and planting the contrary virtue, else the life of man were too short, and his strength too little. He knows well, that it is his interest to be virtuous,

tuons, and to contradict every inclination to vice. But motives taken from interest, are for the most part, if not always, too weak against an impetuous stream of corruption, which bears him down like a torrent, or makes him prefer a present enjoyment to the prospect of future happiness; leaving him only in his leisure hours the melancholy reflection, of being in danger to pass all his life "in doing what he would not, and in omitting to do what he would."

Motives taken purely from interest having thus failed, it will be natural to try if it is not possible to give them an additional weight. Such is the power of love, (and who has not observed it?), that it makes men contradict themselves, renounce for ever those delights in which they had placed the whole of their happiness, and seek no pleasure but that of being agreeable to the beloved object, though but a creature endued only with small degrees of perfection: What might not then be expected from the love of a being infinitely perfect? He knows there is such a being, and having exalted ideas of moral beauty, hopes by contemplation to raise

in his own heart such a flame of love, as will enable him to change at once his course of life, and to reject every pleasure that is not consistent with his duty. The corruption however is too great to be thrown off so easily; and he quickly discovers, that he must again have recourse to interest, and be contented for some time with adding a little strength to his former motives, by reflecting on what he owes to this infinite being; making the best he can of the grateful resentment which these reflections will produce. And here love begins to influence his conduct: it is indeed weak at first; the light by which the beauty of the object is perceived, being faint, as the morning-twilight in a firmament covered with clouds. It gives however a certain pleasure in doing the will of his adorable benefactor, which balances in some measure the uneasiness of denying himself, when the temptation is not great: and as often as he yields to temptation, whether it be great or small, the anguish for having displeased a being to whom he owes so much, throws a bitterness on every unlawful enjoyment.

I call it anguish, and sure it deserves  
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the name. What would not one suffer rather than shew himself to a disinterested benefactor to whom he had been ingrate? What joy, again, to know that he is not only pardoned, but even received into friendship! and what impatience to express his gratitude and repentance by actions that will cost him something! Let people search into their own hearts, and he must be of an unhappy temper who feels not the truth of what I am saying, or enough to convince him that it is not unnatural.

Now let this motive to virtue be called interested, or not, it signifies nothing; it is a motive that takes all its force from the moral beauty of another being set before us in such a light that we cannot avoid perceiving it: and as the beauty is infinite, and the light may always be growing more distinct and clear, the obligations being so great that nothing greater can be conceived \*, it is impossible to tell or imagine to what a height of delicacy our sentiments of gratitude may rise,

\* "What could I have done for my vineyard that I have not done?" It is God who puts the question.



or what extraordinary effects they may have upon our conduct, in making us deny ourselves, and obey the commandments of God, till our faculties recover their first perfection; and our corruption be so wholly done away, that there be no more occasion for self-denial, our inclinations being all as they should be, and our wills inseparably united to the will of God. Then will the beauty of the infinitely perfect being appear every where beautiful, every where amiable; it will need no particular light to set it off to advantage, gratitude being swallowed up in pure love.

But as this is the highest perfection to which we, or indeed any creature, can attain, the way that leads to it deserves a more exact description. I shall attempt it, I hope, with such regard to inspired writers, and diffidence of myself, as the subject requires.

SECT.

## S E C T. III.

1. *Of propriety, or the desire of appropriating.*
2. *Of self-denial, and the cross.*
3. *Of providence, and the right way of corresponding with it.*

I. “**T**HOU shalt love the Lord thy  
 “ God with all thy heart, with  
 “ all thy soul, with all thy mind, and  
 “ with all thy strength. — This is the first  
 “ and great commandment;” and a sincere  
 desire to love him thus, and consequently  
 to do his will in the most perfect manner,  
 is the solid foundation of true virtue, and  
 of a religious life. But as the best foundation  
 comes to be of no value when nothing is  
 built upon it, we must put our hand to the  
 work in good earnest, and carry on this  
 spiritual building by self-denial and the cross.  
 “ Deny yourselves, take up your cross, and  
 follow me,” says our blessed Saviour. He  
 has said it to all, and they who expect sal-  
 vation on easier terms do but deceive them-  
 selves. This is the way that leads to life;

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there

there is no coming to the strait gate by any other. "Nothing that is impure can "see God;" and propriety, which is the source of our corruption, must be weakened by self-denial and the cross before we can bear the central purification which is the gate to eternal life; a gate through which every one must pass to be united to God. For this cause, and for it only, has our Saviour commanded us to deny ourselves, and take up our cross; wherefore the true meaning of the precept can hardly be understood, till first we have a right notion of propriety. It is indeed too deeply rooted to be thoroughly known or described; yet something useful may be said concerning it.

Propriety, or the desire of appropriating, which is the true source of impurity and corruption in every fallen creature, may be considered as dividing into three streams, sensuality, curiosity, and pride, called by St John, *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life*; and to one or other of these all our vices may be reduced\*. But then there

\* *The lust of the eye is by some taken for covetousness, which*

are two kinds of each. There is a pride that seeks the esteem of men, and is the principle of those actions which are done

which is therefore considered as one of the three streams flowing from self-love. But if they mean by covetousness a general unlimited desire of appropriating, it will be propriety itself, the source of our corruption, and not a stream: for propriety and self-love are here the same, and always when the word *self-love* is used in this sense. If the love of money only is meant, as it is a political engine, commanding almost every thing the world can afford, honour, (a sort of it), power, security, pleasure, ease, revenge, &c. covetousness will be the love of honour, the love of power, &c. as money is desired for one or all of these ends. Again, if covetousness means a love of money for its own sake, a love of money which cannot be reduced to one or other of the former heads, it is downright vapour or madness, and as little to be accounted for as any other kind, or to be accounted for the same way.

"The love of ourselves," says M. Ricole, "which is the centre and source of all our maladies, gives us a violent inclination for pleasures, for elevation, and for all that nourishes our curiosity, in order to fill the frightful void which the loss of our true happiness has caused in our heart. And this inclination disposes us to procure to ourselves these three objects of our desires by all sorts of ways, however unjust and criminal." *Essai de Morale*, vol. 3. traité 1. partie 2. chap. 3.

"Some have sought happiness in authority and honour, others in curiosity and the sciences, others in pleasure. These three concupiscences have made three sects, and those whom we call philosophers have in reality done no more than followed one of the three." *Pensées de M. Pascal*, 21.

to procure the love or admiration of others. \* There is a pride also which rests in self-admiration; it can put us upon doing good actions without desiring esteem; for it feeds upon an imaginary disinterestedness and greatness of mind. Nor is it confined to those actions of which itself is the cause; every action, disposition, or tendency, that has in it any thing of virtue or goodness, is its prey. And as to sensuality, an immoderate desire of pleasures, whatever they are, and a resting in the enjoyment of them, merely because they are pleasures, is sensuality. There is therefore another sensuality besides that which has for its object the pleasures commonly called *sensual*; a sensuality that delights only in the enjoyment of pleasures which, classed in this manner, might be called *spiritual*: and this last kind will comprehend not only those of friendship, or love of our fellow-creatures, but even the pleasures that arise from the love of the creator, before it be fully purified from that tincture of propriety which, keeping the mind bent towards itself, fixes our attention upon God, not because he is infinitely



nitely perfect, but because we feel that he is a fountain of happiness to us \*. In like manner, the objects of curiosity will admit of a division into the sensible and intellectual. Whatever is taken in by the outward senses, so as to be thoroughly known, or so known as to satisfy curiosity, without a formal exercise of the intellectual faculties, will belong to the first: while other things, the knowledge of which is only to be attained in a spiritual or intellectual way, will make up the second; comprehending all that goes under the name of *Science*, and all sorts of spiritual and supernatural lights, not excepting even those which are supposed to be immediately from God. Thus you see two kinds of curiosity, as well as two kinds of sensuality and pride; and when we give way to either merely to satisfy an irregular itch of knowing, the natural goodness of the object does not lessen the fault.

\* This distinction, though far from being new, may appear frivolous; but surely it is not. The pleasure of loving is indeed no fault in itself; on the contrary, it is a proof of some remains of natural goodness: yet if it be principally aimed at, it is certain our love is not free of sensuality.

That

That kind of pride and sensuality which in this division I have made the first, are easily discovered ; and the necessity of resisting appears to every one who takes any thought of another life : for besides that we are expressly commanded to guard against them, the least reflection will shew, that as they are strong or weak, we are more or less under the dominion of all the passions, and incapable of acting even a rational part. Thus when we are eager in the pursuit of esteem, or sensual pleasures, and are disappointed, or afraid of being so, anger, envy, hatred, resentment, &c. possess us all at once, or by turns, according to our different tempers. But the case is quite otherwise, if we neither desire esteem nor sensual pleasures ; or if the desire of them is so resisted or neglected that we take no pains to satisfy it : we meet with few occasions to awaken those passions, or corruptions, (for that seems to be their proper name) ; the other kind of pride and sensuality being satisfied with things more in our own power, and consequently not so liable to disappointments from the opposition of others.

Thus, when our pride seeks not the applause

plause of men; if we find ourselves capable of doing certain actions which we think deserve esteem, it will be fully satisfied with the intention of doing them, whatever obstacles we meet with in the execution. Self-esteem is what we are in quest of, which is sufficiently secured whether we succeed or not; and is commonly greatest in the last case, if the first kind of pride be quite neglected; for, having met with no disappointment, we feel none of those passions which used to rack us on such occasions; and so fancy we are completely virtuous\*.

Again, in the pursuit of the pleasures which I have distinguished from the sensual, the passions of anger, malice, and the rest of that kind, are hardly ever stirred up; because our expectations are seldom, I may say never, baulked by the fault of other people. This sure will need no proof with respect to the pleasure which arises from the love of God: it stands without the reach of every creature; and consequently no opposition from them, or disappointment, can ever happen. We have only to consider, then, how far it is

\* — Mea virtute me involvo. Hor.

in the power of others to disappoint us of the pleasures of friendship, or of that love which has for its object one of our fellow-creatures; and if we may not desire and pursue them without having the passions of anger, malice, &c. awakened.

Perhaps it will be thought, that these pleasures, taken in the strictest sense, (and so they must be taken, or the sensuality is of the first kind), being very subtle, and stripped of all the ordinary allurements, they will not be anxiously aimed at, nor will the danger be great of setting our hearts upon them. But the impressions made by subtle pleasures are not always the slightest; to some tempers the contrary will be true. Besides,

It is to be observed, and indeed it is obvious enough, that in *the pleasure of loving* are included all those pleasures which arise from giving and receiving reciprocal marks of friendship, and from a continual attention to the interest and desires of one another: but this attention is so far from creating uneasiness, that, on the contrary, it enlarges the heart, heightens the taste of every pleasure, and throws a gleam of light on the darkest sides of life. Thus  
every

every joy is in a manner doubled; and we have it in our power to lessen every calamity, and in some measure to make every burden light, by dividing it with one who we are sure is willing to bear a part, and to whom we know beforehand we shall be able in our turn to give the same relief. The heart is made for love; and these pleasures (which are justly classed by themselves) are of so high a relish, that some can rest in them with tranquillity, even with satisfaction, under the weight of what otherwise would be very great misery. Yet do they not depend on outward circumstances, or the conduct of other people: it is only from the beloved person that any disappointment can come, and nothing is feared on that side. No distrust can enter: a love that seeks no pleasure but that of loving, cannot subsist with the lowest degree of diffidence. Indeed some blemishes may appear, but these will only stir up a desire to rectify and reform; which may become the foundation of new pleasure, by giving the agreeable reflection, supposing our endeavours successful, that we ourselves have contributed to embellish the object of our love, and



to make it more lovely. And even when the blemishes are such as to extinguish our love, though we lose a pleasure we thought ourselves secure of, I hardly think we feel much of anger, or any of the passions that follow upon it. The common saying, That love when it ceases turns into hatred, is but a common mistake. If the pleasure of loving is all that has been aimed at, it is only a cold indifference that succeeds: and, believing the object has never had but an imaginary beauty, a certain satisfaction will arise in finding we are undeceived; and that our love to a person we think did not deserve it, is now ceased. There is here no place for the racking pains of jealousy: the pleasure is calm while it continues, and does not cease till we would not wish it otherwise. We never desire the pleasure of loving when we do not wish to love; and if there is not another motive, we never wish to love what we think is not lovely: there must then be but little vexation for losing a pleasure we would not wish to preserve \*.

“ But

\* If this account of friendship or love be thought unnatural, the reason may be, that when a multiplicity of views

“ But though we are thus secure against  
 “ the uneasiness of disappointments in the  
 “ pleasure of loving ; since we cannot  
 “ have that pleasure if we do not love,  
 “ and love cannot be separated from the  
 “ desire of good or happiness to the per-  
 “ son, as often as it is hindered by others,  
 “ or our endeavours to advance it made  
 “ ineffectual, the passions will as readily  
 “ be awakened as when we are in pursuit  
 “ of sensual pleasures : wherefore, if upon  
 “ these occasions we do not feel them,  
 “ we conclude with reason they are extin-  
 “ guished.”

All this is true if such occasions are to be met with. But we are now supposing ourselves to have different notions of good or happiness from what are commonly received. We know that pride and sensuality are contrary to true happiness ; we know also that the one is nourished by the

views meet, which happens almost in every case, it is hard to distinguish the sensations occasioned by each : but if there be a pleasure in friendship, independent of all views whatsoever, and I think it is not disputed, there will be at least a possibility that this pleasure may be alone aimed at, and consequently that there have been instances agreeing to what is said here ; I believe they are not so rare as some are apt to imagine.

enjoyment of sensual pleasures; and the other by applause and esteem. It is not then very probable we shall wish to the person we love, things we believe so prejudicial, and which self-love makes us refuse to ourselves, when perhaps they might easily be had. But as to the more refined pleasures, the danger of which we have not yet discovered, we may, as has been shewn, with them without the fear of a disappointment from other people, and consequently without any occasion of awakening our passions. We conclude therefore too hastily that they are extinguished; for here there is no trial. Let us next examine how we are affected by curiosity, which I have likewise divided into two kinds.

The unsuitness of giving way to the first kind is so very obvious, that, supposing a moderate degree of common sense, with but a very little of religion or of philosophy, one grows ashamed of himself as soon as he perceives, that, with eagerness and anxiety, he is seeking happiness in so poor a way. But how different is the case when curiosity takes another turn, and aims at such knowledge as we fancy will not only embellish

embellish the mind, but also make us more useful to the world; or at such lights, as, according to our imagination, will give exalted ideas of heavenly things, and greatly enliven the affections towards God! Then it is no longer considered as a vain useless curiosity, but as a commendable desire of knowledge, flowing from benevolence of temper, or a true sense of religion. And people are the more confirmed in this opinion, because of the inward calmness with which it may, and often does subsist; not reflecting that there is seldom or never any opposition of interests here, and consequently no opportunity of being ruffled. Among all ranks of men an universal inclination prevails to satisfy to one another this itch of knowing: even they who are most desirous of a superiority in knowledge, do all they can to bring their neighbours to a level with their own. No sooner has any one made the most trifling discovery, but he is in pain till by some means or other he can communicate it. What is the reason of so much condescension, it is needless here to inquire; but that it is so, is plain both from books and conversation. Now, while every one is  
thus

thus meeting with all the assistance he can expect or desire, what cause of complaint, or ground of bitterness?

The bad dispositions which are sometimes expressed by the word *passions*, are never extinguished while propriety subsists; and will always be ready to break out, as often as our endeavours to satisfy it are opposed. But though we are angry, envious, malicious, it is never without a cause; and if we are cruel and unjust, it is only when we have some pleasure in view, or desire, that cannot be otherwise satisfied: "No body does ill for nothing." If then we are not thwarted in our pursuits of happiness, or in danger of being so, those passions (by a proper enough distinction) called the *irascible*, are calm, because they are not touched: and this is the case when our sensuality, our curiosity, and our pride, are of the last kind; that is, when we are accustomed to neglect the other.

Now, as a fountain, when it is dammed up on one side, discharges itself with greater violence another way; in the same manner propriety, when it is restrained in the enjoyment of sensual pleasures; when  
it



it is not suffered to seek applause, or to taste it with satisfaction when offered; and when the outward senses are kept under so strict a discipline as not to furnish curiosity with new supplies; then, I say, propriety turns to that side which is yet unguarded: it learns by degrees to make an exchange of pleasures; to be satisfied with intellectual knowledge; and, instead of applause, to be contented with self-esteem. Here the field is open, and without opposition it seeks and takes what it pleases. If things go against it on the other side, it knows how to repair the loss. Every self-denial is placed to the account of virtue; and by improving the taste of new pleasures, it can easily dispense with the old. Thus we grow fond of real or imaginary discoveries in the intellectual way; and soak with sensuality and pride in what are called *virtuous pleasures*, and *the delights of a good conscience*. This is the philosophic virtue, when it is distinguished from the Christian: and were it true that the virtues of the Heathens had been all of this sort, we would hardly think St Augustine's censure too severe, when he calls them *splendid sins*.

To

To rest in such a virtue as this, however much admired by philosophers old and new, is like closing up a putrid sore without searching it to the bottom. A superficial smoothness being obtained, the cure is thought complete; yet the corruption is but driven in, and it will quickly seize on the vital parts, if new incisions are not made.

While we are anxiously endeavouring to satisfy a curiosity which aims no higher than the knowledge of trifling things, or busy in the pursuit of applause, or sensual pleasures, and our tempers every now and then ruffled by the disappointments we meet with, an ordinary degree of common sense will keep us from making an advantageous judgement of our virtue. And even when these pursuits are ceased, and doing good seems to be our only aim; when we are endeavouring to cultivate our understanding, and to advance the happiness of our friends; though the appearances are fair, we would still suspect them, if we felt the motions of anger, of malice, or of envy, as often as our projects did not succeed. But finding also that we can bear without resentment or commotion

tion what used to awaken our passions, we think all is perfectly right, till, upon a narrower search into our own hearts, we discover, that propriety has but taken a new course, in which there is no interfering or clashing of interests; and that there is no extraordinary virtue in bearing injuries we do not feel, or feel so little that propriety finds its account better in the self-complacency which arises from this imaginary patience, than if no injury had been done.

The curiosity, sensuality, and pride, of the first kind, are exposed to the first attack, in which the subterfuges of propriety being easily discovered, if it does not conquer fairly, it must yield: but here all is carried on under the appearance of virtue; and if we are not careful to observe the springs of our actions, and every motion of the heart, we shall find perhaps at the end of many years, that propriety is as vigorous and strong as when first we began to think of religion. We must not however neglect the understanding, or not endeavour to know things which are fit to be known; we must not with our friendship extinguished, or desert those we  
P p love;

love; idleness and inactivity must be shunned, and no opportunity omitted of doing good; in short, we must not make ourselves stupid, that we may not be curious, proud, and sensual. All we can do is, to think of ourselves as little as possible, that the love of God and of our neighbour may be the motive of our actions: and when proprietary views come in, whether by surprise or weakness, let us humble ourselves before God, acknowledging the corruption of our hearts, and begging that he would make us what we ought to be. Let us then continue to do our duty, bearing with patience our infirmities and corruptions, and waiting to be fully purified when and how it pleases God. But by waiting is understood a perfect resignation; a willingness to be purified by such methods as infinite wisdom shall appoint. This ought to be our prayer, and the constant disposition of the mind every moment of life; that, even in the midst of our necessary affairs, and amusements, sometimes necessary too, we may always find ourselves in this temper as often as we think upon God, or reflect upon the wretched condition we are fallen into

into by sin. This, I say, ought to be our constant disposition ; and without it, it is impossible we can be thoroughly purified, or propriety entirely destroyed. It cannot however be acquired but by a faithful co-operation with the divine grace ; that is, by “denying ourselves, and taking  
“up our cross.” This part of the work is ours ; and if we are not willing to perform it, all pretences to religion are vain.

II. THAT we may so deny ourselves and take up our cross as to be capable of following Jesus Christ in the narrow way that leads to eternal life, the first thing to be done is, to offer ourselves unto God as fully and freely as we can. It will probably be with many and great reserves ; but it is enough if we do our best : he knows our weakness, and how little is to be expected from a creature but just turning away from the pleasures of the world, in which it has been accustomed, perhaps long, to take its delight. By this giving up of our will, or desire to do it, (for it is seldom any more at first), grace is received into the heart, and we begin to act by faith. The natural tendency of the



spirit is awakened; it endeavours to shake off the load of corruption brought upon it by sin, and to surmount every obstacle that stands in the way of its returning to God. Its efforts however are but faint, and the struggle hardly to be perceived: for the effect of sin upon the spirit is like that of rust on the needle of the compass, by which the impression of the loadstone is so weakened that it lies without motion, as a piece of common iron.

But because the effects of sin are not confined to the spirit, that the comparison may be the more just, we may consider the soul as the plane of the circle in which the needle moves; and the dust occasioned by a long neglect, as well as every other thing which may stop or retard the motion of the needle, will represent the present disorderly state of the soul.

When the needle is again applied to the loadstone, it recovers its tendency to the north, which will be proportionally strong or weak as it has taken a deep impression or not. But how slight soever the impression may be, it will give it a motion, at least a tendency to move, by which we perceive it has been out of its place, and likewise that there are obstacles in the way, which must

must be removed; for otherwise the smallest tendency were sufficient to carry it forward. It is just so with the spirit. As soon as the light of faith begins to shine, it has a tendency, a desire, to return to God, and feels itself out of its proper element by being separated from him. It makes therefore some attempts to move; but finding them fruitless and vain, because of the obstacles with which it is intangled, there is great danger of our losing courage, and consequently of falling into the stupid lifeless condition we were in before. What is then to be done? We must have frequent recourse to prayer, by which the tendency of the spirit is not only kept up, but strengthened; and the soul must be cleaned and purified from its disorders and irregularities.

The prayer of this state is indeed very imperfect. Though we have some sense of the divine beauty, and consequently some love to God, it is so weak in comparison of self-love, that hardly would we be influenced by it to quit our present enjoyments, and to undertake the painful laborious work of purification: at least I believe there are but few with whom interest

rest is not the prevailing motive in the beginning. Thus when we desire and pray that we may love God "with all our heart," and are begging strength to conquer our bad habits, and to resist temptation, it is often because we know that we cannot be happy otherwise. Yet such is the goodness of God, that he accepts of these prayers, imperfect as they are, and gives such a measure of grace as we are capable to receive. We begin then to look back with abhorrence on our past sins, and to think of bidding an eternal adieu to the unlawful pleasures which have kept us at a distance from God. But still there is a secret reserve, an unwillingness to part with them; and we are in such a state as St Augustine tells of himself in his Confessions, when he prayed that God would make him chaste, but not soon. We can easily enough resolve to dispense with things to which we are but little attached; but would gladly reconcile religion to our favourite sins: and though we cannot do that, we think we may go on for a little, and that we shall part with them more easily at another time. But now is the time; our conscience (which to us is the  
voice

voice of God) tells us so; and what it declares against must be given up. To neglect its remonstrances is what St Paul calls *quenching of the Spirit*: we grow hardened in our sins; prayer becomes an intolerable burden; and for the most part all pretences to religion are thrown up, or we amuse ourselves with outward practices and a formal devotion. But if we are faithful to observe the dictates of conscience, and to follow them as much as we are able, it will conduct us, step by step, from one degree of purification to another, until we arrive at that state in which this kind of activity ceases.

After having got the better in this first skirmish, and, in consequence of our good resolutions, passed some time in a regular course of life, and such a prayer as we are capable of, other faults of a different nature are shewn us. It is not enough to have set a guard upon our actions, so as to abstain from what is called *immoral*; for it commonly happens, that as we gain ground on one side, we are losing it on another. There are things in themselves innocent, but as soon as they become the object of our attachment, they change their

their nature with respect to us: of these however we have no suspicion, and willingly suffer our affections to settle upon them, because in doing so we find it easier to withdraw from what we know to be criminal. But now we begin to see, that all attachments are hurtful; and that, before we can advance farther, there is a necessity to break even those we accounted innocent. Here is a much more terrible conflict than the former; and many there are who have not courage to undertake it. In the first we proposed only to exchange criminal pleasures with innocent; but we see now, that all must be sacrificed on the least signal; and our love to God is not yet so strong as to give us any sensible delight in making a sacrifice to please him. All the pleasures we have quitted, and are going to quit, come before us in the most alluring forms the imagination can represent: on the other hand, the paths of virtue appear rugged; and we see no beauty in holiness that we should desire it. Our faith begins to stagger; and we are ready to fancy that the mountain of God is inaccessible.

Thus wavering, and uncertain what resolution



solution to take, we shall often find ourselves on the point of returning to those things we had left. There is, however, a fear of offending God, and a desire to please him, sometimes mixed with sentiments of love; though perhaps the fear of losing our salvation may be the principal cause of both. We feel at the same time an inward expectation of assistance from God, and that he will not leave us a prey to the corruptions of our own heart. But our passions, our desires, and affections, being all against us, though we know we ought to resist, we can hardly wish to do it. We think of the way in which others pass their lives; and that many will be saved whom pride makes us believe to be in a worse state than we are in. From a false humility too, which upon this occasion we are willing to encourage, our desire to be perfect is called *arrogance* and *presumption*. We are constantly telling ourselves, that there is danger in attempting things above our strength; that it is folly for every one to think of attaining perfection; that there are heroes in religion, as well as in war, and the actions which they can easily perform, would be impossible to

others, and the attempt ridiculous ; that we ought therefore to be contented with a moderate sanctity, and the practice of such virtues as are within our reach, trusting our salvation to the mercies of God.

Thus, under the appearance of humility, and confidence in God, propriety would persuade us to stifle the motions of grace, by which we are pushed on to a more perfect self-denial : but if we throw ourselves into the arms of our heavenly Father, begging often and with earnestness that he would give us strength to perform what he requires, and to break the fetters which hinder us from advancing towards him, neither the power of the enemy, nor our own weakness, need give us any alarm ; we shall come off more than conquerors if we are but willing to fight.

As soon as we are resolved not to stand upon terms with God, but to follow the motions of grace whithersoever they shall lead, we enter, as it were, into another region. We had already, in some measure, renounced the pomp and vanities of the world, and withdrawn from the occasions of temptation as much as our circumstances would allow ; we had refused to the body  
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many of it superfluous demands, contenting ourselves with the plainest things; we had been careful to moderate our passions, and to keep down our pride; we had been doing, or endeavouring to do, to others all the good we were able; for though we could not love our neighbour as ourselves, we knew it was our duty, and that in the mean time we ought to act in the same manner as if we did; we had been exact in our devotions, praying earnestly that it would please God to make us love him "with all our heart," to deliver us from the evil and corruption of sin, and to cleanse us from our secret faults: but we knew not what we asked, nor the extent of our prayers; we knew not that it behoved us to drink of the cup of which our Saviour drank, and to be baptized with the baptism he was baptized with; we were fancying ourselves near the end of our journey, and that we had little more to do but to enjoy the delights of a good conscience, and with patience to wait the reward of our labours. This mistake was shewn us, and some of our hidden corruption laid open. We were stunned with the terrible prospect of new sacrifices and

unexpected sufferings: but having at last consented to be torn from every thing, and resolved, with the divine assistance, to break through every wall of partition that separates us from God, we find ourselves strengthened above our hopes. A flash of divine light breaks out from the centre of the soul, by which the tumult occasioned by our irresolution is quieted; and we see the justice of refusing nothing to God; we have an easiness in prayer, and our resignation appears unlimited; for the heart is warmed into love, we are sensible of it, and feel a pleasure in loving: we find a willingness to bear every suffering it shall please God to lay upon us; we think no sacrifice will be too great that he shall require; we feel no reserve, and our attachments seem to be broken in a moment. But this fervour passes quickly away; nor is it given but as a cordial to support our drooping spirits: it is only the food of children, and we must be weaned from it by degrees; we must learn to suffer without consolation, and to love without the pleasure of loving.

Our views of self-denial being thus enlarged, new and different temptations will occur;

occur; we must therefore fight with different weapons, but still we must fight, or we cannot conquer. It was the desire of happiness that engaged us, for our own sakes, in all the self-denials and exercises of piety we had hitherto gone through: if we rejected worldly and sensual pleasures, it was to procure pleasures greater and more durable; if we did good to our neighbour, the benefit was principally designed to ourselves; if we desired to love God, it was that we might be happy. Thus propriety, though often unperceived, was at the bottom of all; and a religion that has no better foundation, is like a house "built upon the sand." Our spiritual building therefore must be founded upon the solid rock of true faith, or it will be in danger with every storm and tempest. While we were but removing the rubbish, we saw our work, and were pleased with it; but now the earth must be dug up, that the faultiness of the foundation may be discovered, and a new one laid. Nothing is more disagreeable to nature than a task of this kind: the labour is hard, and the more it advances, there is the greater appearance of disorder and confusion.



confusion. We believed ourselves adorned with virtues, but find they are only superficial, and little more than a varnish by which our corruption was hid from us. We did good to our enemies, but did not love them; we gave to the poor, but expected a reward from God; we shunned applause from others, but accepted of it from ourselves; we thought we were humble, and were proud of being so.

Mean time the recesses of propriety are not laid open all at once, but by slow degrees, and in proportion to the fidelity and courage with which we submit to the purifying operations of grace. By these it is gradually stripped of its false ornaments, and forced to appear in its natural shape. The fine fabric of disinterested virtue, of which we gloried as being the work of our own hands, is found to be but "a whited sepulchre," adorned without, but within full of rottenness and corruption. This discovery being made in such a way as to leave upon the mind a thorough conviction of our own vileness and insufficiency, self-esteem necessarily falls to the ground; for it is impossible to bestow esteem even upon ourselves, if  
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we have not an opinion that we deserve it. And that desire of intellectual knowledge, whether it regards spiritual and supernatural things, or such only as may be known by exercising the natural faculties of the understanding; that desire of knowledge, I say, in which we used to applaud ourselves, appears in a quite different light, appears what it really is, a vain unprofitable curiosity. Those pleasures too, those sublime and spiritual pleasures, which are the object of the second kind of sensuality, are greatly changed with respect to us. They were innocent before, at least we thought them so; but having now other notions of sensuality, we cannot conceal from ourselves, that no pleasure can be so pure but it may become not innocent, if desired and enjoyed merely for our own sakes: and in the state we are now speaking of, the conscience is too delicate to suffer us to enjoy with satisfaction what we cannot enjoy with innocence.

But how terrible to nature are the steps by which we are thus brought to the knowledge of ourselves! Instead of acquiring new beauties, we seem to be daily losing

losing of those we had: either the mask is dropping off from some or other of our counterfeited virtues, or we are employed in resisting inclinations to sin, and passions we thought had been extinguished. We are employed, I say, in resisting; but often without success; our strength fails, and we are conquered by enemies that used to fly before us. We feel no longer that satisfaction and delight in virtue, which was wont to support us in all our self-denials; while pleasure appears with greater charms than ever, and we desire with vehemence what we know we ought not to take. Our fervour in devotion is turned into lukewarmness: for though we are deeply sensible of our own weakness, and expect assistance only from God, we are so distracted in our thoughts, that we can hardly fix them for a moment. We must not however be discouraged, as if we were forsaken by God, or falling back into the bondage and slavery of sin: if we do the best we can, and are faithful to prayer, humbling ourselves under the weight of our misery, and keeping in the presence of God, there is no danger; it is because we  
are

are not yet thoroughly acquainted with the nature of propriety, that we are surprised with what ought to have been expected.

As we advance in the knowledge of ourselves, the esteem decays; but still we have pride, and self-love would have it satisfied. It is vain, however, to ask what we have not to give; it turns therefore another way, and pulhes us by a base hypocrisy to seek from others what we are conscious we have no title to. Our sensuality again, and irregular desire of knowledge, being now equally restrained on all sides, catch at every object, and can take up with the poorest, finding they can have no better. Thus all demand with impatience, what, because of a secret nourishment, which is now withdrawn, they had but lately passed from without regret; and, as often as through negligence we give way to them, we fall under the dominion of the passions already mentioned; our pursuits being then of such a nature, as to make us liable to disappointments, from the opposition of others. When, on the contrary, we resist, the difficulty is vastly greater than before: we have no pleasure in re-

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serve, no self-complacency to feed upon: we resist because it is our duty, and scarce feel the advantages of a victory; for no sooner do we conquer, than pride would persuade us that we are virtuous; thus we have a new combat to sustain, not less difficult and dangerous than the former. It is the same with those actions which we do for the good of our neighbour. Self would appropriate every thing, and we are under a constant necessity of being upon our guard.

These now are all natural effects of propriety, when it is driven from the retirements in which it thought to have solaced itself without disturbance; and it is no wonder it is not pleased with a virtue which is directly levelled against itself. Let us have patience till it be rooted out, and our taste of virtue will return. We shall then love it, not because it is ours, but because it is virtue; we shall be virtuous without pride, happy without sensuality, and shall have such knowledge as will be profitable without desiring more.

“ But have we not reason to fear, that  
“ our conduct is unacceptable to God,  
“ and propriety gaining ground, when  
“ not



“not only we find ourselves losing the inward tranquillity we enjoyed, and the pleasure we had in doing good, but also that easiness in prayer, and sensibility of love, with which we used to make application to God? and is it possible in such a state to persuade ourselves we are advancing?”

If our state is such as it ought to be, we will not think whether we are advancing or not, or will think of it as little as we can. We know the love of God is “the end of the law:” we desire to love him with all our heart; and that all our actions may be done with an intention to please him, carefully rejecting every other motive. We know this is our duty, that to deny ourselves is the only way we can perform it, and that true self-denial is to resist propriety where-ever it appears; but we know also, that we cannot do this by our own strength. We have recourse therefore to him who has promised to give unto those that ask; and though we cannot ask as we ought, we ask in the best manner we can; confiding in the goodness of God, who is able and willing to give us every “perfect gift.” These

things we know, and we desire to know no more; for, having given ourselves unto God to be disposed of as he shall think fit, we are far from inquiring by what methods he will prepare us for the uses he intends to put us to: and if any anxiety arises, we consider it as a motion of propriety; and resist it, when great, by a new resignation, and when it is not, by neglecting it.

It must however be owned, that this trust in God, this entire abandon of our whole selves, is hardly ever absolute and uninterrupted in this degree of purification; or it is the very last step of it, and, as it were, the passage or entrance into the next \*. It may therefore be sometimes necessary to make use of reason, in order to strengthen our faith while it is yet imperfect: for if we can see that things ought to be so, we shall have the less difficulty to go on with cheerfulness in this narrow way.

That our losing the inward tranquillity we enjoyed, and the pleasure we had in doing good, are natural effects of propriety when it is every where resisted, I have

\* See the last two paragraphs of this section.

shewn you already: it were unreasonable then to be discouraged with what is really a proof that we are performing our duty. If we would reap the fruits of peace, we must first conquer; we must bear with the disorders of war, and not fancy that we are undone for being engaged in the hurry and tumult which is unavoidable in fighting: until the enemy is driven out, our tranquillity is but stupid indolence, and our peace a false security.

“ But how shall we believe that we  
“ are performing our duty, or that ever  
“ we shall conquer our enemies, when we  
“ are forsaken by God, who alone can  
“ make us conquer? And how shall we  
“ believe that we are not forsaken, when  
“ he does not hear our prayer, and our  
“ cry comes not before him; when he  
“ leaves us to ourselves in the time of our  
“ greatest need; leaves us to be trampled  
“ upon by enemies we had often routed?  
“ Are these signs that we are in favour  
“ with God, or taking the right way to  
“ please him? Are hardness of heart,  
“ and want of recollection, marks of true  
“ devotion? or is the love of God ac-  
“ quired by growing insensible to the  
“ charms

“charms of infinite beauty? Have we  
“not reason then to be afraid? have we  
“not reason to return to our former me-  
“thod, and to decline a war in which we  
“are every way on the losing hand?”

Let us now consider what sort of enemy we have to deal with, what we are aiming at, and by what means we may hope to be successful. Have we forgot that it is propriety we are fighting against, that it is it we would have destroyed, and starved to death? Is not this the end of all our self-denials? Is it not for this we pray, and beg assistance from God? But what probability of starving it, if it was continually pampered with the most delicious fare? or what favour to support an enemy that is always doing us mischief? Where were the difficulty, where the self-denial, in quitting worldly pleasures, if we were immediately to be filled with divine communications in such a way as to give us greater delight? How easily might we suffer injuries, and put up affronts; how easily neglect applause, and bear to be despised by men; how easily, in fine, might we separate ourselves from the creatures, and stand unconcerned as to their conduct,

duct, were we always sure of being careffed by the creator ! But humility is a virtue. Would this make us humble ? We who cannot resist a temptation, or bear the smallest injury, without admiring our fortitude or our patience, would we not fancy ourselves something more than human, and look with contempt on the rest of mankind who were yet inflaved to sin, if no temptation or injury could touch us ? How necessary then is it that pride be extinguished before we be delivered from the weaknesses which sin has made natural, or so supported as not to feel them ! Again, when we reflect that it is not the kind of pleasure, but the manner of enjoying it, that makes sensuality ; and that it is with the greatest difficulty we can enjoy any but in that way ; must we not acknowledge, that, like St Peter, we would be for “ making tabernacles,” were we admitted, not to the full enjoyment of God, that being impossible in this state, for nothing that is impure can see God ; but to “ eat of the crumbs that fall from his table ?”

It is true indeed, (I say it is true, for we are told it by those who know), that many  
have



have delightful sensations of the divine presence, and feel a supernatural strength, even when they are not far advanced, and sometimes in the very beginnings of the Christian life: but we must not from this conclude, that they are particular favourites, or the only persons whose ways are agreeable to God. It is but as the Apostle was preserved from sinking by our Saviour's stretching out his hand; we see his unsteadfastness is found fault with, and he walked upon the water without danger while his faith continued firm. If it was not for the littleness of ours, these sensible supports would not be necessary, and they are never given but when they are: God loves us too much to protract the time of our purification, when we are able to go forward without stopping in the way. Let us suffer then the retardment of consolations without fear or disquiet: when they are necessary, they will be given; and when they are not, they would be hinderances.

That God has a watchful eye over us we know by faith, which, in our present state, is the best way of knowing it. We know also our duty, and have within us

a faithful monitor that will not let us forget. Let us go on then, doing from day to day the best we can; not minding what we feel, or feel not, nor thinking too much on our past miscarriages or future conduct. If consolation be given, let us receive it with thankfulness, at the same time acknowledging our weakness which has made it necessary. Let us so receive it as to acquire new strength, and that our gratitude may serve to increase our love; always remembering, that our intention ought to be, to please God, and not ourselves. If, on the contrary, we are seemingly left to ourselves, let us not lose heart, or be dismayed, as if God had forsaken us: we shall sometimes stumble, and even fall; but it is better to fall through weakness, if we rise again with humility, than to stand with pride.

But "to deny ourselves" is not all: if we would follow Jesus Christ, we must also "take up our cross;" by which is meant a perfect submission to the divine will, as it is made known to us by the dispensations of providence. It is not to make crosses for ourselves, but to bear those which are prepared for us; accepting them

as necessary means of our purification, not only with patience, but with thankfulness; and endeavouring so to order our steps, that the purposes intended by them may be fully answered. Those things which go by the name of *mortifications* and *austerities* may be useful in the beginning for some who by constitution are addicted to the grossest kind of sins; but for the most part, I believe, they do more harm than good: they nourish pride, and fix us too much in outward practices, while things of greater moment are neglected. A moderate plain way of living is a constant mortification, which ought to be practised by every one, and at all times: but as to other things, the true mortifications are those which come by providence; and upon the use we make of them, our advancement in religion does in a great measure depend.

III. NOTHING is more universally talked of than providence, and nothing seems to be less understood by the generality of mankind. That the world is governed by infinite wisdom, all acknowledge; while at the same time they act as if every thing

went

went by chance. *Submission* to the will of God is likewise a common word; it is in every one's mouth, and every one fancies he knows its meaning. When crosses happen, or misfortunes of any kind, they will tell you, It is the will of God, who does nothing wrong; that we ought therefore so to bear them as not to grudge with providence. And it is very true. But is this all? Have we nothing farther to look to? and is there no meaning in them but to make us suffer? We shall next be told, that the meaning is to teach us patience, and the uncertainty of earthly things. These, no doubt, are useful lessons; but is there yet nothing more? and have we done all that is necessary, when, by a new project, or by taking one pleasure for another, we can bear our crosses with patience because we do not feel them?

If one believed that blind chance presided over human affairs, he might be full as much convinced of their uncertainty, as another who thought them under the direction of providence: and seeing it were to no purpose to grudge with his lot, he would, for his own sake, endeavour to

bear it as easily as possible, which, with an ordinary stock of prudence, would put him on the common methods of acquiring patience. That is, he would make the most of what he had, thinking as little as he could on things no longer in his power; he would forget, if possible, his former disappointments, by filling his head with new designs; and that his patience might cost him the less trouble, would prepare himself beforehand, by often reflecting on the instability of every enjoyment, and that the best-laid projects are not always successful. Thus far, you see, reason and self-love will carry us, whether we believe a providence or not; and if we may judge by appearances, and the common notions of providence, it is but seldom that religion carries us farther, and there are few that think it should. If this however was to take up our cross, it might be done without a change in our inward disposition, or outward conduct.

This way of understanding providence is common to the worldly-wise, and those who are in the first stages of the Christian life. Both endeavour to be patient; and both think they have done enough, if they



they get over the uneasiness which is naturally felt, when people are baulked of their expectations, or their schemes of happiness disconcerted. All the difference seems to be, that the last use only such means as appear innocent, while others take what comes first to hand, or pick out those they think will be most effectual. But conscience, in the beginning, is so heavy, and so little accustomed to find fault with our actions, that even they who have a regard to it are not much straitened: *innocent* is yet a very comprehensive term. To act, however, according to the light we have, is all that can be expected; and indeed it is all that is required: for if the intention be sincere, the light will be still increasing, and new discoveries made as to the design of providence in giving us crosses, and the right way of bearing them.

When we reflect on the shortness of life, and carry our thoughts no farther, how little does the prospect appear! We are brought upon the stage, but it is only to act in a few scenes; and then we must retire to make room for others. When the curtain is dropped, it is the same whether

ther we have acted the part of a king or a beggar; the poverty of the one, with the contempt that follows it, and the glory of the other, being passed away. But if we enlarge the view, taking in a future existence, these few scenes come to be of infinite moment: not for the figure we shall make in them, or the pleasures we may have, for these can receive no additional value; it is only the manner of acting our part that is worth our care. Now, as we cannot make such reflections, and not be fully convinced that the saving of one soul is of more value in the sight of God than the settlement of kingdoms, must we not conclude, that the principal, I might say, the only, design of providence, is to manage things without us in such a way as will make us fit to act the part we are intended for hereafter? And if we consider it in this light, which certainly is the true one, we shall find, that the littlest things are not below the care of an almighty being.

In the fall of empires, and other revolutions of that nature, an over-ruling power is often observed, and acknowledged: it is the same in every calamity, or  
remarkable

remarkable change, whether to the better or the worse, in which many are concerned. Now why may not a particular person observe also an over-ruling power in things that only concern himself? or must he believe that all is mere accident, because they are brought about in a way that gives no disturbance to the rest of mankind? and though he may discover a natural cause for almost every change in his condition, and every thing that befalls him, shall he therefore think there is nothing of providence in it, as if God never acted but in a miraculous way? If, for instance, of poor he becomes rich, whether by a *lucky hit*, as it is called, or by his own industry; is he not to look upon his riches as the gift of God, because they fall not from heaven like the manna? If, on the contrary, he falls into poverty, is he to regard only the injustice he may have met with, or whatever else has been the immediate cause of this change in his state? Many such questions might be asked; and it is plain there is but one answer to be given by all who believe a providence. For as each individual being is an object of the divine care, as much as a whole

whole system taken under one general view, it must be allowed, that an event which respects only a single person, is just as applicable to providence, as another in which multitudes are concerned: and if nothing may be called *providential* that is not extraordinary, or is the effect of second causes, miracles being now so rare, our notions of providence will differ very little from those of Epicurus.

It is a vain, and, I think, improper attempt, to separate providence from second causes, and second causes from providence, or to distinguish from either what is called *accidental*: and I will venture to affirm in general, that whatever may influence our conduct with respect to another life, or contribute to our acquiring those dispositions without which we cannot love God, should be referred to providence; for these are of too great importance to be left to chance, or the caprice of other beings. Let this idea of providence be as extensive as it will, it is impossible to find a reason for lessening it, that will not strike against all sort of providence whatsoever: and even in this large

large acceptance, it is not inconsistent with the liberty of the creatures.

That the conduct of those with whom we live, or with whom have any connection, is the immediate cause of many both of our crosses and satisfactions, is very certain; and it is no less certain, that nothing can determine their way of acting but their own will. But then it is only a few by whose conduct we are thus affected; while that of others touches us no more than if they lived in a different world. Now by what means come we under the influence of those particular persons? Is it not by having been born at such a time and place? A change in either might have given us a quite different situation: for persons of other tempers and circumstances would have had other ways of acting. Thus, without the least inroad on the liberty of men, or visible interposition of the divine power, we might have had different crosses, and different pleasures; different helps to religion, as well as different temptations; and different opportunities of being virtuous, or the contrary. People may call this *chance*, if

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they will; but if others chuse to call it *providence*, it will be as fit a name.

Again, Though free agents cannot be forced to act, or to refrain from disposing of what is in their power, there are motives by which they may be, and really are, determined to act in one way rather than in another; and as they vary, their conduct does so too. Now a motive is said to vary when it loses of its weight, or acquires more; one of which must happen upon every change in the value of what is aimed at, (it makes no odds whether the change be real or imaginary), and when the difficulty of prosecuting, and uncertainty of success, appears greater or less than was at first expected. We are not indeed to fancy, that upon every occasion the mind makes a formal reasoning of this nature; but it is certain these things come before it, and it considers them, hastily enough perhaps, but still in such a way as determines it to change or continue its conduct; and whatever resolution be taken, it is executed, for the most part, with no less vigour than if a philosophic inquiry had been made. These resolutions, however, are not very stable:

a new thought gives a new turn, and we always act in consequence of the motives which appear strongest at the time: and this inconstancy, in some degree or other, is, and must be, natural to all men; the mind being too little to weigh upon all occasions every motive with exactness. Besides, the often unlooked-for opposition of others, (who have their reasons too), and a world of accidents impossible to be foreseen, do sometimes make things more difficult than was expected, and sometimes quite impracticable: in the first case a change of conduct is often reasonable, in the last it is always so. Now let any one consider, if there is not here room enough for providence; and if free agents may not be made instruments in the hand of God to work his will, their liberty remaining absolute and uncontrouled.

But lest it be thought that this way of giving providence a place in the management of those things which depend immediately upon the will of men, will leave too little for chance; it may be worth while to consider what is, or ought to be, understood by that word.

Whatever is the effect of a cause that

neither was nor could be foreseen, nor any reason given why it should have existed precisely in such a way and at such a time, or why it should have existed at all, is accident, or accidental; and the cause itself is called the *effect of chance*: and whatever is a consequence of it, whether mediately or immediately, will likewise be accidental; for let there be never so many intermediate causes, seeing it could not have existed without the first cause, which was an effect of chance, it is certainly an effect of chance too.

By this acceptation of *chance*, (and, if it be a word of any meaning, I see not how it can be otherwise defined), there is hardly any thing but may be resolved into it; not an action or event but is the effect of some cause, which is the effect of chance. Had Alexander been born a private man, or died a little sooner, the Persian empire might have stood; and the same accident that put an end to his life in Babylon, might have done it in Greece. Again, had he lived a little longer, his conquests might have continued with his children, and the earth been preserved from the terrible devastations which the ambition

ambition of his captains brought upon it. Caesar's ambition must have been unsuccessful, or concealed, had he lived in other times: and had Hannibal used his victory at Cannæ, there had been no Rome to conquer. Indeed one cannot look into a history without observing a number of accidents concurring in the most inconsiderable events the historian thinks worth relating: how many then must be necessary to the success of great designs! and what a train of consequences would be prevented by the failure of any one!

But we need not go to histories and public affairs to observe the effects of chance; let us but consider our own life, or that of another, and we shall see it is but a series of accident after accident. Even those things which depend immediately upon the will of other men, are no less accident than the rest: for though they are free, and act only in consequence of their own will, many chances must concur to put it in their power to act so and so with respect to us. It may be the intention of a covetous man to cheat every body he deals with; but they only are cheated who have money, and fall in his way. The injustice

stice of the oppressor does not go far, and his power lasts but a short time; so that the distance of a few miles, or being born a little sooner or later, might have put us out of his reach. In short, whatever uneasiness we have to suffer from the tempers of those with whom we live, it is all but accident. It is by accident we come together, and we are separated in the same way. There is really nothing in life, but, by tracing back a few causes, lands in chance, where we are forced to leave it. Nor is there a reason for calling one thing an accident rather than another, but that we seldom look beyond a first or second cause. Let us only accustom ourselves to look a little farther, (a very little in most cases will serve), and it will appear, that nothing is so easy but a small variation of accidents might have made it impracticable, or determined the agent to a different conduct; a concurrence of accidents is likewise necessary to bring a particular person into such circumstances as to be affected by it; and what can be more accidental than things thus depending on several combinations of accidents?

Now, if this be chance, where is providence?



dence? and will it not be more reasonable to say, Whatever is the effect of a cause that neither was nor could be foreseen, nor any reason given why it should have existed precisely in such a way and at such a time, or why it should have existed at all, is providential, and the cause itself the effect of providence; and whatever is a consequence of it, whether mediately or immediately, is likewise providential; for, let there be never so many intermediate causes, seeing it could not have existed without the first cause, which was an effect of providence, it is an effect of providence too?

“Is there then no such thing as chance?  
“and is it by a special direction of providence that even the littlest things come  
“to pass?”

If we are sure a thing is so extremely little that it can have no manner of influence on the conduct of any person whatsoever with respect to another life, nor contribute any manner of way to the acquiring of those dispositions without which we cannot love God, that thing, whatever it is, may be ascribed to chance. And surely this is the only rule for judging  
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of the littleness of things. For could it be supposed, that the most extraordinary revolutions or events of any kind, the greatest calamities that ever happened, and the most universal; I say, could it be supposed that they had no influence on the tempers and dispositions of men, their greatness will dwindle into nothing. If, on the other hand, the turning of a straw could make one single creature really better or worse, the doing or not doing it were no longer a little thing, but a thing of great consequence.

“But if this account of providence be true, what becomes of liberty?” It is just what it was, absolutely free. It makes no odds with respect to liberty, whether it be providence or chance that puts things in our power: of these every one may always dispose according to his will; for providence and fate are far from being the same. Fate is irreversibile, but providence accommodates itself to the conduct and tempers of men. Nineveh was saved, because the inhabitants repented; and had there been ten righteous persons, Sodom and Gomorrah had not been destroyed. “It is appointed for men once to die;”  
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the decree is irreversibile, it is fate: but how and when, together with all that happens from the beginning to the end of life, belongs to providence.

To have right opinions, no doubt, is a great advantage, provided we act in consequence of them; but if they have no influence on our practice, it signifies little whether they be right or wrong. One thinks every thing is determined by particular and irreversibile decrees, and that men, like puppets, are made to act by a will not their own: another believes the freedom of the will, and a providence in the sense I have given it: a third puts chance instead of providence; or if he admits of it at all, he supposes it to be the same with fate, and gives it a place only where fate would not be inconsistent with liberty; the truth of which he does not question. In such a difference of opinions about a matter of so great importance, one would think some difference of conduct might be expected. What the conduct of the first will be, if he makes it agreeable to his principles, I have had occasion to observe\*: that of the last is likewise ta-

\* See sect. II. 1. of this part.

ken notice of, as you may see by turning back only a few pages \*: and the second opinion ought to lead into such a conduct as I am going to describe.

As soon as we have chosen our part, and have fully resolved to dedicate the remainder of our life to the service of God, we begin to consider with some anxiety, how or by what means we shall discover his will, which we now sincerely intend to make the rule of our actions; and not only of our actions, but of all our desires and all our affections. We know we ought to love him with all our heart, but we feel it is only ourselves we love in that manner. Could we change at pleasure the object of our love, we would banish self from our heart, that it might be filled with God: we often make the trial, but still we love ourselves. To love our neighbour, is as little in our power; I mean, with such a love as is required of us: to love our enemies, being yet more difficult, not to hate them is all we can pretend to. To be meek and lowly, is likewise a part of our duty: but who can be humble when he pleases, and so calm within, as to re-

\* See the second paragraph of this article.

ceive the greatest injuries without being ruffled? These things are impossible to the natural man: we have not the necessary dispositions. But then we may desire to have them, and may act in the same manner as if we had them; which, with the divine assistance, or grace, (and that need not always be mentioned, because it is always supposed), is a sure and infallible way of acquiring them. That we may desire to have them, will not be questioned; and that we may act in the same manner as if we had them, is no less true. Though we be not humble, we are under no necessity to make applause the end of our actions, or to let our thoughts dwell with complacency on the value our pride gives them. Nor need we resent injuries though we are not meek. We love not our enemies, but we may do them all the good we can: and though we love ourselves more than our neighbour, we may take every opportunity to advance his happiness, and exert ourselves with the same activity as if the case was our own. And all this we may do with an intention to please God; making his will the rule of our actions, and a desire to perform it the



motive; renouncing our own will, and consenting to be torn from every thing that hinders us from loving him; loving him in the mean time as much as we can, and acting in the same manner as if we loved him “with all our heart.”

However difficult a conduct of this sort may be, however contrary to nature, and the present temper of the mind, every one must acknowledge it is not impossible, and that there is not another way to acquire those dispositions without which we cannot love God. I say, there is not another way: for though all are not equally perfect, and there be many degrees of virtue; if any one shall say in his heart, “Thus far will I go, and no farther,” he has no virtue at all; the want of intention to please God as much as he is able, like a worm at the root of a tree, spoils and corrupts the whole. But allowing the intention to be sincere, seeing different things are required according to the talents we receive, and that the difference of tempers and circumstances makes different methods of purification necessary, there is good ground for every one to desire a more particular knowledge of the will of God,  
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than can be had from general rules and precepts; but whatever anxiety may in the beginning arise upon this account, it will land in a calm and exact observation of providence with all who have right notions of it. They will consider every thing that happens as a new opportunity put in their hands by God, to execute some part of his will; and will neither expect nor desire to know it by another way; as no way can be more particular, none can be so sure; there is no danger of delusion; no room for the imagination to work; and all so plain, that "he that runs may read."

It is an easy matter for one who is rich, to know that he ought not to live in pomp and luxury, while his neighbour is starving at his door; or to withhold from those who want, that he may satisfy an avaricious temper, and indulge himself in the pleasure of seeing his heaps increase. He will therefore be contented with a moderate way of living; and whatever is thus saved, he will consider as justly belonging to those who stand in need of his assistance. He does not wait for "a voice from heaven," commanding him to relieve

lieve his brethren ; it is enough that he has it in his power : for he knows for what end his riches have been given ; and that when he is disposing of them in this way, he is doing the will of God. Nor does he confine his good works to the giving of alms ; but, as far as he is able, defends the weak from the injustice of the oppressor, pleads the cause of the innocent, and guards the simple from falling into the snares that are laid for him. He knows, that the power of doing good is not put in his hand for nothing ; and that if he neglects to use it, he is the unprofitable servant who hid his talent in the earth. And while he is thus doing his duty, he minds neither the applause nor envy his actions may occasion : that he be not puffed up with the one, he keeps his own nothingness constantly before his eyes ; and if the other gives him any thing to suffer, he accepts it as the will of God, and resents the injury no otherwise than by doing good. Those to whom he is engaged by nearer ties, he considers as more immediately intrusted to his care. He endeavours to make their life easy, and accommodates his temper to theirs : he gives advice when it is proper,  
but

but never assumes to himself a superiority of judgement ; it is given only as an opinion, and in consequence of his resolution to do all the good he can : he reproveth with mildness, and never but when it is necessary : and if there be any whom he is obliged to instruct, he does it with caution and exactness ; setting things before them in their true light, and teaching them to know their value.

But in taking care of others, he does not neglect himself. He remembers that he is one of those beings with whom God “ desires to take delight ;” that his soul is a jewel of inestimable value, and designed to be one of “ the stones of the new Jerusalem ;” that life is the time appointed for polishing and making it proper for this glorious end, and the charge of doing it committed to him. From these motives he undergoes with cheerfulness the necessary labour. He knows indeed, that his interest is inseparable from his duty ; and looks to the promised reward with a view to increase his gratitude and love, accepting it with joy, because it comes from God. As he takes every opportunity of assisting his neighbour for a declaration of  
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the divine will with respect to his works of charity, so likewise he considers every cross, that is, every disappointment, every humiliation, and every uneasiness of whatever kind, as helps sent him by providence, either to conquer his pride, or to weaken those passions and irregular affections that hinder him from loving God; and when he makes this use of them, he knows as certainly that he is doing the will of God, as if he was "clothing the naked, and giving food to the hungry." Nor is it only in remarkable things that he observes this method: even the little crosses which are daily to be met with in every state and condition he looks upon as carved out for him by providence, and always adapted to his temper and circumstances. Of these, what is fit for one would not be so for another; and though they appear as nothing when they are over, they have their weight in the time, and a right way of bearing them will make them very useful. But whether they be great or small, few or many, he receives them just as they are prepared for him; and neither grudges with his lot, nor thinks his burden too heavy. Deeply sensible of his



his own weakness, he sees the advantage of thus depending upon the will of God; who so manages things, as to give him unexpected opportunities to advance in the great and necessary work of purification; and knocks off those fetters by which he is chained to the earth, and the things of it, when perhaps he has not strength to break them, nor even resolution enough to attempt it, and sometimes does not know that they ought to be broken.

Thus he has really no injuries to resent, or disappointments to fear; and those who by others would be called enemies, are considered as instruments employed by the great architect to bring his spiritual building to such a state of perfection, as to be a proper temple for the Holy Ghost; while he, on his part, is careful so to accommodate himself in every thing to the will of God, that his designs may be fully executed.

This, I think, will be the conduct of all who believe rightly of providence, and are willing to "deny themselves, and take up their cross," that they may follow him who is "the author and finisher of our faith;" by whom a gate is opened to

states of a different kind, (as soon as we are prepared), wherein all opposition on the part of the creature being taken away, it remains in the hand of God, to be formed and polished according to his will. If he lays it on a bed of roses or of thorns, if he gives it consolation, or gives it none, if he fills it sensibly with his presence, or hides his face from it, its contentment is the same: it rests in the divine will, and its resignation is as natural as to breathe.

But it is time for me to stop. It must be unfit for those who have no experimental knowledge, to describe states in which all is carried on by the immediate power of God working inwardly in the spirit, or centre of the soul, while the creature contributes no otherwise to its own advancement, than by a perfect resignation. Of such states descriptions have been made by some admirable persons, who, in this life, have passed those hard but necessary degrees of purification, and been admitted to such a union with God, as a spirit clogged with "flesh and blood" can bear; but it were presumption to mix either our words or ideas with theirs.

## S E C T. IV.

1. *That certain practices by some recommended as essential to religion, are for the most part unprofitable, often hurtful.*
2. *That Christian perfection is attainable in every state of life; and that state fittest for each particular person in which he is placed by providence.*
3. *That it is very possible, not only to live in the world without being corrupted by it, but even to make the performance of whatever is necessary because of a social life, a mean or help to attain perfection.*

1. **W**HEN people are told they ought to deny themselves, and take up their crosses, they fancy it is the same with telling them, they ought to retire from the world to live the life of a hermit: and this notion, which is pretty common, has put many persons of good intention on a course of life they have not strength to go through, because they are not called to it. Whoever imagines that

God cannot be served but in a desert, or that they only are true Christians who macerate their bodies by severe mortifications and austerities, is but little acquainted with the end of religion, or the nature of man. These practices give indeed a shew of sanctity, and men are touched with what is extraordinary in religion, as in other things. Thus, in the lives of saints every little circumstance of this kind is set before us, while the representation of their inward dispositions, though vastly more useful, is made carelessly, and as it were by accident: but in their own writings we find something more valuable to admire than fastings and hair-cloth; which they seldom mention (I speak of those who are farthest advanced) without a caution to hinder others from imitating what they look upon as unnecessary for the most part, and often prejudicial, when there is not a special direction. Their care to subdue their pride, and to loose their affections from earthly things, the calmness of temper with which they suffer injuries, their contentment under the hardest trials, and perfect resignation to the will of God, cannot

cannot be too much admired : in these we ought to imitate them ; and every one may do it without changing the state of life in which providence has placed him.

Luxury is now so common with men of all ranks and conditions, that to satisfy it seems to be the chief project ; and this perhaps is the reason that some who write upon religion take no care to keep within bounds in recommending these practices, which are most contrary to it. Yea, they are recommended in such a way as if they made the essence of religion ; tho' it is certain there is nothing of goodness in them, but in so far as they contribute to bring the mind into a right temper : and when they serve not that end, they must be hurtful. Most people, indeed, are but little in danger of being led into excess on this side ; for nature is ready enough to take allowances : but nature can turn itself into different shapes. One who has bent his thoughts upon religion, if he has a fondness of extraordinary things, will have a great inclination to form his life upon the strictest models, when he sees certain practices much admired, and has been taught to consider  
them



them as the only means of becoming eminently holy. If he succeeds, (which happens rarely to those who undertake such things of their own head), his sensuality, it is true, is vanquished, but it is next to a miracle if his pride is not greater than it was before : and if that be the case, whatever he may think of himself, he has acquired as little sanctity by his self-denial, as a warlike prince who undergoes the fatigues of a long campaign, that he may have the glory of conquering. If, on the other hand, he fails in his attempt, he returns to the world with more eagerness than ever, believes self-denial to be impracticable, and resolves to think no more of religion.

But allowing there was no danger of pride ; allowing also that these extraordinary things might be attempted unsuccessfully, without falling afterwards into a careless way ; is it not worthy of compassion to see one who has a real desire to please God, bestowing all his time and care on regulating his outward manner of life ? A rigid self-denial in things that regard the body, and a strict observance of certain rules he has laid down to himself,

self, is the whole of his religion. He is constantly taken up about himself, constantly in fear of doing too much or too little ; wedded to his own ways, and impatient of contradiction. To give any relaxation to the mind by innocent amusements, is inconsistent with his scheme of self-denial, and a fault he would not be guilty of for the world. In short, he goes on after this manner, till his temper is soured ; and he becomes at last a burden to himself and others.

There are who have got strange notions of Christian perfection, by understanding some precepts in the gospel in the strictest sense the words will bear, without regarding the present state of things, or the performance of other duties more expressly commanded \*. Nor do they consider the weakness of human nature, but seem to pique themselves on giving it no quarter : they will be perfect all at once, and sometimes by methods quite contrary to the true spirit of religion. A multiplicity of outward practices, and such ways of living as naturally tend to make people

\* Christian perfection, &c. by Mr Law, and other books of that kind by different authors.

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proud, fullen, and morose, are not only recommended, but the duty of bearing injuries without resentment, is so explained, as if one could not be a Christian unless he deprive himself of the common security against rapine and injustice which the laws of every country have provided. “ Resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever will compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain;” are our Saviour’s words, and it seems they are to be understood literally. That is, if one resolves to make the will of God the rule of his actions, he must give up all he has to any one who takes a fancy to demand it; he must go a-begging from door to door with his family, because another inclines to live in his house, and possess his lands; he must encourage all whose consciences put them under no restraint, to perpetrate the worst of things by an assurance of impunity and success. It is not enough so to receive injuries as to with no harm to the person who does them;

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to have a sincere desire to do him all the good we can, while he is acting a quite contrary part with regard to us; and to be willing to suffer yet more, if by it there is any prospect of bringing him into a better temper, or that such a conduct does not interfere with the care we are obliged to take of those who immediately depend upon us. But (though this certainly is our Saviour's meaning) they tell us the rule is without exception; and every consideration, every duty, must yield to that of not resisting evil. Why do they not also advise to cut off a hand, or pull out an eye, if either of them offend us?

Whoever resists evil from a principle of revenge, or an unwillingness to suffer, may easily convince himself that he is not a disciple of Jesus Christ: he has not the meekness and patience which are necessary to make up the character of a true Christian, and will take no pains to acquire them. But again, if one resolves not to resist upon any account, whatever crosses, sufferings, or inconveniencies, he he may thus bring upon himself, he has no title to call them *providential*: they are all of his own procurement, and there-

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fore it is more than probable they will be unfit for him. If however he cannot resist, but by means not lawful, which to a good man is the same with an impossibility, the consequences of not resisting will then be providential, and ought to be accepted with thankfulness. And when he himself is only concerned, the duty of not resisting will carry him farther: he will remember that our Saviour says, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." If therefore the injury be not greater than he has strength to bear, and if he has ground to believe that the person who is doing it will be brought into a better temper by his patience, he will not resist. But in such cases every one must judge for himself: nor should any rule be given, save that it is fit to lean to the side on which nature finds its account least; and to take care not to be influenced by anger, malice, or pride.

They who press the duty of not resisting evil in an unlimited sense, commonly with the same breath recommend a  
community



community of goods, which they look upon as a necessary part of religion, because of the practice of the first Christians, who laid their goods at the feet of the apostles. But they ought to remember, that this community of goods lasted no longer than while the church was confined to Jerusalem. We see the apostles themselves earnestly desiring the Christians to be liberal in their contributions for the support of the poor; and if all had been in their own hands, or at their disposal, there was no occasion for such intreaties. Nor do they blame them for not imitating those at Jerusalem; which most certainly they would have done, were it a necessary part of religion, or any part of it. And as to the punishment of Ananias and Sapphira, it has nothing to do in this argument: they were punished for their dissimulation, in pretending they had given all, when they gave but a part. If all mankind were what they ought to be, the fitness of having our goods in common needed not be held forth; it would follow of course: and otherwise, though it were practicable, it would do harm.

But, as if it behoved us to get rid of

our goods at any rate, until the world can be persuaded to make every thing common, each particular person is told he ought to give all to the poor; and the duty of giving alms is pushed to an extreme, as well as other things. But are they very sure that every one can bear poverty, and the consequences of it? And though one could be sure of himself, (which I much question), how does he know that others, who may have a just and natural title to be moderately provided for by him, can bear it? And if, by an indiscreet and lavish way of giving alms, he incapacitates himself to do that, is it not true, that he has disposed of what belonged to them? There goes a story of one who stole to give to the poor: such charities, I think, would not be very different from those we are now considering. We ought indeed to look upon ourselves only as stewards; but how little soever a steward should take to himself, he must not dispose of the rest all in one way. To give to the poor, every one according to his circumstances, is an indispensable duty: but there are duties besides giving of alms, duties which poverty may render

der us incapable to perform; and when the incapacity comes from our own imprudence or mismanagement, we are not much less in the fault than if they were wilfully neglected.

The next thing proposed for the advancement of religion is, to level ranks, and to take away all marks of distinction among men. With this, and a community of goods, and a few more alterations, an agreeable scheme of life might be imagined, but quite inconsistent with the present state of the world. It is folly to look for a paradise here: we must even take things as they are. One really needs no help to discover a great many bad consequences from such a project, if it was to take effect. The outward state of the world is by providence perfectly well adapted to the inward; we may rest satisfied it could not have been better: if the last is changed, the first will be so too; and it should neither be wished nor expected sooner.

“ But, though a reformation of this  
“ sort cannot be made general, it is in  
“ our power at least to reform one. We  
“ cannot bring down others; and if we  
“ could;

“ could, perhaps ought not ; but as to  
“ ourselves we are under no restraint.”

It were proper in the mean time to tell us why this gets the name of *reformation*. May not one be a good Christian in every state and condition ? or must he make himself remarkable, and set a sign before his door, that every body may know there is something extraordinary within ? If one should turn off his servants, wear coarse cloaths, and live much below his rank, it is probable he would be as little benefited by it as the Pharisees were by the prayers they made in the streets : and I believe his example would contribute to the increase of true religion just as little as theirs. Diogenes trampled on Plato's carpet, and told him he was trampling on his pride ; Plato's answer, That he did it with greater pride, was very good, because it was true. The outward life of Diogenes was of the strictest kind, and Plato's in the common way. One may sit in a chariot, with his footmen behind, and have as little pride as another who walks a-foot. He may sit down to a table covered with several dishes, and different liquors at his side-board, without vanity,

vanity, or a desire to please his taste; he may receive the common marks of respect, and be as little elated as if he were used with the greatest familiarity, and called by his plain name; and if so, he may safely continue where he is. He will have his crosses let his station be what it will; and there are many ways of self-denial that cannot be observed, which for that very cause are to be chosen; for, of all shews, that of self-denial is the worst.

But will it not be asked now, Where is the difference betwixt one who endeavours to imitate Jesus Christ, and another whose only plot is to spend his days in pleasure, and to have as much of earthly happiness as he can?

If we see a person labouring with anxiety to rise to a higher rank, or to increase his riches, that by adding to his table and equipage he may appear with the greater lustre, and that his house and gardens may be magnificent, and agreeable to the most expensive and elegant taste; while another, remaining quietly with what he has, contents himself with things which may justly be called *necessary*, because they could not be wanted without

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an air of self-denial, which religion makes him avoid, as well as an affectation of magnificence and grandeur; it will be easy to observe a difference: and if the difference betwixt morality and immorality, and betwixt shewing a regard for religion, and treating it with contempt, be added, there will be all that ought to appear betwixt the best and the worst. We may, however, take in another character, and compare the miser with him who employs, in relieving others, what he has not necessary use for: but as charities should be concealed, if possible, and are so very often, they will not always be a differencing mark. It is the same with every thing of that nature: that principle which makes one conceal his alms, does likewise influence him in his other actions; and it is a rule from which he never deviates, "Not to do openly what is better done in secret." Nor is there a sure way of judging who is patient and calm, and who not: ill-humour, impatience, and a desire of revenge, may lurk under fair appearances; since whatever one may feel, politeness and pride will on many occasions keep him from troubling the world with it.

it. The difference here is indeed exceeding great, (I mean as to the inward dispositions in general); but it is only known to God, and one should not venture even to judge of himself. Yea, we may judge of others with greater safety, provided it be on the favourable side: but if appearances are very bad, it is best not to judge at all.

“Will it not however be a question still, “if a man can be very good, whose outward way of living is such, that many “men of pleasure think they would be “happy could they but imitate him? “and may he not then be indulging himself in luxury, notwithstanding the appearances of moderation which have “been mentioned?”

But will it be a question too, if these men of pleasure would stop, as he does, when they might go farther? To be sure, he may be indulging himself in luxury; but it is as sure he may not, and that in the midst of affluence and plenty, his life may be a life of self-denial. He is not indeed scrupulous about what he shall eat or drink; for he is not afraid of offending God, though he take what is necessary

of that which is set before him. He is so little fond of pleasing his taste, that he hardly thinks whether it is pleased or not; and though he does not give orders to have things ill done; if they happen to be so, he will take as much, and with as little chagrin, as at another time: for he knows no other end of eating and drinking but to support nature. He lets custom give the law to his table, as well as to the fashion of his cloaths, with one regulation only, that both be as plain as can consist with his resolution not to be remarkable; which is likewise observed in every other thing. Now, if one should ask how such a life can be a life of self-denial, let him reflect but a little, and if he cannot answer himself, he must be a stranger to his own mind, or something more than man. He will find there are still many occasions of self-denial, if one is but willing to use them; and even this moderation he so little admires, is the best and surest guard against both sensuality and pride.

Whatever is said here of one state of life should be applied to all; for there may be a too much or a too little in every thing, and

and those in the lowest as well as the highest ranks, may fall into either extreme. There may be luxury under the poorest roof, and the greatest appearances of humility may cover the greatest pride. Certain ways of living belong to every state; providence, in fixing the one, has pointed out the other; and religion, guided by prudence, will prevent mistakes.

But as that way in which there is least danger, and greatest probability of being truly good, should be chosen, salvation being a thing of too great moment to be risked on any account whatsoever; before one can be reasonably satisfied that a life outwardly common, may not be inconsistent with religion, the consequences ought to be weighed.

II. THERE are two ways of passing life: one, to retire from the world, that we may have all our time to bestow upon the "one thing necessary;" the other, to continue in the state wherein we find ourselves, living in a familiar commerce with men, and subjecting ourselves to what is called *decency*, and such rules as are established by custom, when they are not con-

trary to the laws of God. The first seems to be the most perfect, and therefore eligible by all who intend to make the best use of life: yet I have preferred the last. Some of the reasons are already given, and more, I think, will appear when the advantages and disadvantages of both are considered. Mean time I am far from designing to lessen the esteem due to those who have with success withdrawn from the world, and, as it were, by plain force expelled the corruption of nature: I admire their virtue, and the firmness with which they executed whatever they thought necessary or useful; but how far they should or can be imitated, is the question. The first part of it may be answered, by comparing two persons who have taken different ways, and each perfect in his own.

One then having looked seriously into his own condition; and being sensible of the corruption of nature, and the necessity to resist; observing likewise how much anxiety arises from the ordinary cares of life; how much time and thought is bestowed upon them; how little progress is made in virtue; and how many temptations

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tions one is exposed to by conversing with men, of whom it may almost be said, that they invite one another to offend God,—thinks it the safest course to fly from danger, and to separate himself from the creatures, that nothing may hinder him from employing every minute of this life in preparing for the next. Now, of this resolution it must be a consequence, to be deprived of many little amusements and satisfactions by which the mind was supported, and kept from feeling its own weight; and though they were, or might be enjoyed without attachment, there being nothing to fill their place, the taking them away comes to be a considerable part of his self-denial, and adds likewise to the difficulty of resisting in other things: for the mind being more empty, more at a loss to dispose of itself, and therefore more sensible of its wants, aims at pleasure with greater impetuosity, and often at such as before was but little minded. Hence the necessity of a stricter self-denial with respect to what concerns the body; and perhaps a necessity too of those mortifications and austerities, which, I think, go more properly by their own name than by that

that of self-denial. He must be constantly on his guard even as to the littlest things, constantly keeping down his body as well as his mind. When violent methods are used, it is but changing of hands if all does not keep an equal pace. He has, however, fortitude enough to go forward notwithstanding these difficulties; and he does it without pride: and though he lives as if he was alone upon the earth, he falls not into melancholy, nor is he impatient to be delivered from the prison of the body. In short, we shall suppose all his dispositions to be of the best, and mix with his virtue as little imperfection as is consistent with the state of life he has chosen; allowing also his self-denial and mortifications to be as crucifying to nature, as the admirers of this way please to make them.—Let us endeavour, next, to do as much justice to the other:

He knows that nature is corrupted in all “the children of Adam;” that to return to the primitive state of innocence, or as near it as can be, is the true end of life; and he resolves, with the divine assistance, to use it for this purpose. He sees the danger of living in a bad world; men  
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corrupt one another, the temptations to sin are numerous, and a good deal of time and thought is bestowed on things of little, or rather of no value, things which pass away in a moment, and are foreign to his main design. But he likewise sees danger on the other side: he knows the weakness of nature as well as its corruption, and that, if more is laid upon it than it is able to bear, it must sink under the burden, or throw it off: melancholy, peevishness, and pride, are what he is afraid of, or a desperate resolution to risk all, rather than be subjected to rules which, because of their severity, may at last appear impracticable. For these reasons, and not from any softness of temper, or compassion to himself, he thinks it the safest course, and therefore the most sure, to undermine by degrees, rather than to make violent attacks he may not have strength to support. What the laws of God expressly forbid to every one in every state, he cuts off all at once: in this no management is to be used, and he uses none. But those things which are not unlawful, but as they are hinderances to his spiritual advancement, he removes slowly, and as he finds they stand in his way.

way. Thus he breaks his attachments and conquers his bad inclinations by little and little; leaving always something for the mind to feed upon; but it is something with which he is less pleased, and can therefore more easily part with, when he thinks fit to take it away. The cares of providing for the body, and of observing the little decencies expected in common life, which, because of the anxiety that for the most part enters, and the time taken up about them, gave him in the beginning both fear and trouble, come at last to be no more than such amusements as he has real use for; and being not of his own choice, are better than others he must have substituted in their room. The essential duties which have respect to those with whom he lives, or to mankind in general, he looks upon as part of religion, and in performing them does his best, but without anxiety, leaving the event to God. He seeks not satisfactions or pleasures of any kind for pleasure's sake, and will take no more than is necessary to keep the mind from preying upon itself. If any attachment or sensuality is like to arise, it is immediately crushed by turning  
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his thoughts another way, or by depriving himself entirely of that which was the cause of it. As to the pleasures of sense, he has little occasion for a strict self-denial: by a constant practice of neglecting them, the impression they make is so faint, that when such as are not in themselves unlawful, come by accident, it is hardly worth while to refuse what gives so small delight. Nor does he employ either his time or thought about making the body suffer: it is not by unnecessary sufferings that God is to be pleased; when they are necessary, he knows they will be sent by providence, and these, whether of body or mind, he is ready and willing to bear. This is his outward life, but the inward is, "hid with Christ in God:" for though he lives in the world, "he is not of it."

From these characters, if they are fairly given, as I think they are, you may see the grounds on which we are to judge of the virtues peculiar to each. It is not the doing this or that, but the doing what we ought to do, that makes true virtue, or true religion; and whoever neglects any thing of that kind, does in so far neglect



his duty, and consequently his virtue must remain imperfect. We are, every one of us, obliged to contribute to the good of others as much as lies in our power; and few are so situated, but they may do good to some: he therefore who, by withdrawing from the world, incapacitates himself to do the good he might have done, had he continued in the state wherein he was placed by providence, may be said to live only for himself; and his virtue will not be perfect, whatever progress he may make in the other parts of religion.

But perhaps we are going too fast: for it is not laziness, nor a selfish temper, that hinders him from doing to mankind all the good he might. To love God is the first and great commandment; and if he throws the creatures out of his thought, or endeavours to do it, it is that his recollection may be the greater, and his application to the creator uninterrupted.

Could life be spent wholly in a direct application to God, it were perhaps a fault to employ any part of it another way; but that being impossible in our present state, there will be many intervals which  
must

must be filled up some how or other ; for we must always be doing something : in these we have time enough to perform all our duties ; and for such as have not a particular call to retire outwardly from the world, it will be difficult to find a better way of employing them \*.

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\* That there have been particular calls, I make no question, and many eminent saints have become perfect in the solitary life : whosoever then is sure that he is called to it, ought to obey ; " obedience is always better " than sacrifice ; " and there can be no danger in doing the will of God. But let him be very sure that this inward call, which he takes to be from heaven, be not from pride, melancholy, levity, hypocrisy, laziness, or disgust with the circumstances in which providence has placed him ; let him be sure he does not renounce society from any of these, or perhaps a mixture of all : let him next examine well that he mistake not the work of his own imagination for the work of God : and if his call can bear this test, he may, yea he ought to retire ; he ought to obey the voice of God, and content himself with the virtues of the solitary life, which he may conclude are the most proper for him. But if he suspects his own sincerity in the examination, (and who has not reason to suspect it ?), let him remain where he is, till the call be absolutely clear ; let him remain with peace and tranquillity, and keep the post assigned by providence, until he be called away by a special and plain command. It is true, want of sincerity may likewise be suspected on the other side, and the voice of God may be stifled by unwillingness to quit the world and worldly pleasures ; let him therefore live in the world without be-

To say there is no danger of being corrupted by the world, were indeed a strange assertion; there are few that might not justly contradict it from their own experience: but I am persuaded much of the danger is of our own making. If we lose our guard, and throw ourselves unnecessarily into temptation, I know not what else is to be expected than yielding to it. When it is a desire of pleasure, or of being seen and talked of, that makes one leave his retirement, the corruption is within, and he has already yielded; he has himself therefore to blame, not the world, if he returns a worse man than he was, for he knew he was not going among saints. But if he goes into company to give some relaxation to the mind, and to keep off melancholy; or for any reason but to satisfy curiosity, sensuality, or pride; he may do it with as much innocence as he may eat when he is hungry: the one is sometimes not less necessary than the other. I dare promise he will be made perfect in the world, or will be called to a more solitary life by providence, or such a special command, as, in spite of infirmity and corrupt nature, will carry along with it its own evidence.

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ther. And though a little pleasure or satisfaction may arise, he need not be uneasy, nor afraid he is offending God; it is like the pleasure of taste; when it is a consequence of what must be done: let him only take care not to enjoy it with fondness, and to retire from danger as soon as he can. But pleasure is not the only thing the world affords; injuries and vexations will be met with too: and if he suffers these as he would receive a bitter potion for his health, he may have all the advantages of society, and none of the harm.

It must nevertheless be acknowledged, that without a more than ordinary firmness of temper, we shall never be able to act after this manner: so long as we are influenced by human regards, or a fear of what people will think or say, the smallest temptations will be too strong for us. Both the contempt and applause of men must be equally neglected; for if we desire to serve God, we must resolve upon it in good earnest, and not turn aside from the paths of virtue on any account whatsoever. And here is the great difficulty: we desire to be esteemed even by people

people for whom we have not the least value; and to get, or preserve, a character, is the aim almost of every one. Yet how poor a thing is a character, when established on neglecting our duty! yea, how poor is it at any rate! and how unworthy the care of beings destined to the enjoyment of God, and to whom life is given to prepare themselves for so great and glorious an end! What is reputation? what is fame? what is the good or bad opinion of men? Where is the advantage or disadvantage whether they speak of us good or ill, or whether they speak of us at all? Let us but ask ourselves, what we are hunting after, and we shall be ashamed to give an answer. A blast of breath, a thing of no value, is allowed to come in competition with eternal happiness! and (which ought to make us still more ashamed) a trifling purchase to which we can hardly give a name, is preferred to doing the will of God! This weakness, or rather this disease of the mind, is undoubtedly one of the greatest obstacles to religion, and very often among the last that are removed: yet, while it subsists, a familiarity with the world must be dangerous;



gerous; for though we resolve, it is but faintly, and faint resolutions will never do. A private life, therefore, is the best; and it never was in my thought to recommend another.

The advantages of a private life are so obvious, that whoever has any taste of religion, will soon be determined in his choice, if he has one to make: and I always think their virtue is to be suspected, who, under pretence of public-spiritedness, throw themselves as it were headlong into the world, when providence seems to have pointed out a safer way, by placing them in circumstances that would be thought easy by many of their own rank, who perhaps are not much given to self-denial. To run upon danger unnecessarily, shews too much of confidence in our own strength, or too little value for what is risked. Let us endeavour to have the most perfect dispositions; but let us at the same time content ourselves with the practice of those virtues which belong to our state: when others are required, providence will furnish opportunities without our help; and till then we may throw in our mite to the public good, with assurance

furance that it will be accepted of by him whose pleasure alone we ought to have in view. To live in a conformity to the will of God, is the perfection of virtue: if we place it any where else, we place it wrong. It was said by one, I think it was Monsieur Bernieres, "You would give alms, but God will have you poor." The thought is extremely just, and may be applied to other things as well as to giving of alms. Let us always be ready to do such good works as naturally fall in our way, and never incapacitate ourselves to be instruments in the hand of God: but let us also consider we are but instruments, and leave it to him to employ us or not. None of us, I believe, are so very useless but we will be sometimes employed: but then we may be fit for one thing, and not for another; and we are so bad judges of our own qualifications, that when we meddle without a call, it is more than an equal chance that we spoil the work.

But however weighty the reasons are for preferring a private life, (and sure they are as weighty as can be), before we begin to think of religion, we may be  
fixed

fixed in another way by engagements religion itself will not allow us to break ; or by a special direction of providence may be obliged to act more upon the stage of the world than our inclinations would lead us to. Now whichever of these be the case, we must by no means imagine that we are therefore not called to as high a degree of sanctity as those who have their time at their own disposal. We must indeed keep a stricter guard, because the dangers are greater and more frequent : but this is all ; for the most public life may be made consistent with religion, as well as the most private. If we love God, or desire to love him, it is impossible we can persuade ourselves that we are not obliged to pass life with innocence, or that it ought not to be our principal care to preserve our souls and bodies pure and spotless unto "the day of the Lord." The rest are all but secondary duties, and may be performed by others ; but this is intrusted to us in so peculiar a manner, that it can only be done by ourselves. It is indeed "the one thing necessary :" and as there is no state in which it may not be done, there can be no excuse for neglect-

ing it. It is true the difficulty is sometimes great, but never insuperable: how strong soever the temptations may be, if the will does not yield, we remain untouched; and no power on earth can force it. And tho' the inclinations have a great influence on the will, it amounts to no more than that we may be tempted: we are still secure if we please; not in our own strength, but in the strength of the Almighty; for we have but to ask, and it will be given. Let us not then throw upon the world a blame that justly belongs to ourselves.

III. To make encomiums on the world is no part of my intention; I do not think it deserves them: but neither do I think it quite so bad as it is sometimes represented. However, be that as it will, we have got no other world to live in; and he who has placed us in it, knows well what is the properest situation. We are so framed that we must associate with one another, not for the sake of the body only, but even for the mind: without society life would grow irksome, we really could not bear it; there may be a few exceptions, but they will be very few. We

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are then under a necessity of conversing with men, and with ordinary men too : for we have no access to angels, and saints upon earth are rarely to be met with. But if we converse with them, it must be in their own way ; they will not be managed by us, nor is there any reason they should. They ought indeed to act upon right principles : but what if they do not ? We have not power to constrain, and seldom a title to advise.

“ Shall we then join in their extravagancies ? shall we be ashamed to own a sense of religion ? shall we dissemble with our tongue, approving of what our conscience tells us to be wrong, and make vice familiar, by concealing our regard for virtue ? ”

This is one way of conversing with men, and perhaps the most common : but if we take care not to fall into what may be called extravagance too, though of a different sort, we shall find they are not so bad but that it is very possible to live and converse with them on other terms.

Whoever makes it a part of religion to contradict the common rules of decency and good-breeding, should live by himself,



self, till he learns to separate religion from starched formalities, with which it has nothing to do. In these men expect compliances; and I cannot imagine on what account they should be refused. Some of them perhaps are trifling. And what then? Is our time always employed about things of such mighty consequence that we cannot condescend to bestow a little of it even upon trifles? But whatever they be in themselves, custom has given them a value, and they cannot be neglected without shocking those with whom we are: by this they are taken out of the rank of trifles, and become really a part of our duty. Let us only observe them in this view, and however little they appear to us, while we are accommodating ourselves to the weakness of our brethren, we are doing the will of God: it is but keeping that always before our eyes, and no action is so insignificant but it may be turned into a virtue.

To enter into the detail of what belongs to decency and good-breeding, were to no purpose: they are things we grow insensibly acquainted with from education and company; and use makes them so natural, that

that they are practised without trouble, almost without thought. Neither are they inconsistent with morality, or with religion; and yet they are all the positive demands the world makes upon us: if we will give it more than it asks, it is our own fault. We may be immoral if we please; we may treat religion with contempt; and may find people to herd with to whom it will be agreeable: but if it is not our custom, none will expect it of us, or think themselves ill-used though we make no compliances of that kind. Thus we have no occasion to join in their extravagancies: we may go on our own way, and no body will take it amiss, provided we allow the same freedom, and press no compliances from those whose custom it is to be wicked. This, indeed, is a point of good-breeding men will hardly dispense with; and whatever hard names it may get, I think it is no more than even religion requires. Not to offer advice to those who will not regard it, or not to force upon them our opinion of their conduct, may be called dissimulation, a shame of being religious, and want of concern for the good of others; but

but it will only be called so by such as do not sufficiently reflect upon the tempers of men. Example is the best reproof; for the most part it is all we are intitled to give: besides, if we have a concern for the good of others, we will not endeavour to reform them by methods which would probably make them worse. Again, one who has a right sense of religion, will never make of it an unprofitable shew: he lives according to its rules, and by that makes it plain he is not ashamed of being religious.

There is yet one thing that gives a great deal of trouble to some who would be very exact, and are very scrupulous. Much of the time we are with one another, passes in conversation, though we are told we shall be called to account for every idle word; and as it is now managed, they think every word idle. But that is a mistake. It were, no doubt, extremely desirable, that conversation could be carried on in a way more useful; but to tell us how this shall be brought about while the world continues what it is, will be difficult for the most ingenious reformers. To set men a-talking of religion who never

ver think of it but when they talk, were to banish common sense from conversation; and to turn into ridicule the most sacred things. Common subjects are fittest for common men; and in mixed companies those are the best on which every one can say something. Though instruction is one end of conversation, it is not the only: to ease people of the burden of themselves, and to take, as it were, a little breath from the cares and anxieties of life, is another; and words that contribute to either of these ends are not idle. When we are in company, whether by accident or choice, it were not a bad way, I think, to consider ourselves as met for one or both of these purposes. If it naturally falls in our way to give or receive instruction, it is very well; but though the preference is due to that, if by saying an agreeable thing we can help to keep up good-humour, it is very well too; and if neither should happen, it will be but such a disappointment as may be easily suffered. By this means, without taking upon us to give rules to others, every conversation, as to us, may be turned into a work of charity; and though our words may not be

be always profitable, the goodness of our intention will make them not idle.

To act the buffoon, is a part too low for any rational being; but as a chearfulness of temper is in itself an excellent disposition, there is no fault in letting it appear: it shews we are contented with our state; and may be of use to make others, for some time at least, contented with theirs. Nor is it contrary to the caution given by St Paul: we have but to read the passage, and we shall easily know what the apostle means by "foolish talking and jesting\*." It is uneasy indeed, when things of that nature come in, or any thing in which religion forbids to take a part; but when there is not great difference of rank, one seldom finds it very hard to turn the conversation another way. If that, however, cannot be done, we may either leave the company, or entertain ourselves with our

\* "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named amongst you, as becometh saints: neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, and of God." Eph. v. 3. 4. 5.



own thoughts; and for the most part, I think, we are not obliged to shew our dissent in a more remarkable manner. But these are not the greatest difficulties in conversation.

By a natural effect of the love we have for ourselves, we fancy we are possessed of valuable qualities, which in company we endeavour to set forth to the best advantage; pride being rarely satisfied with self-esteem. I say not that every one goes into company with this intention, but it steals insensibly upon us; a certain complacency arises on saying a pretty thing: and if such a superiority of judgement or wit is discovered as to make others admire, we commonly think them in the right, and so we admire too. But this by all means must be guarded against, else our words will be not only idle, but something worse: we shall grow daily more and more full of ourselves; and, forgetting the true end of conversation, never be pleased but when we think we are admired. It is true, if we can conceal our vanity, it is enough with respect to men; but even that we are not always masters of;

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of; and it is no extraordinary thing to see people of sense and figure become the secret jest of a company in which they are endeavouring to shine. Mean time, if we consult religion, we shall find a better reason for renouncing vanity, than the danger of falling into contempt. It will tell us, that "God resists the proud;" and that if we would be acceptable to him, we must resolve not to do or say any thing whatsoever in order to be esteemed. A resolution of this kind may straiten us at first; our conversation may not be so lively, perhaps not so instructive neither: but it is no matter; our words cannot do so much good to others, as they do harm to ourselves, when it is vanity makes us speak; and to keep them in, is, in such cases, a necessary part of self-denial. Not that we need be always in pain lest any expression should drop that may procure esteem, it is enough we have it not in view: but when our words have accidentally had this effect, we must take care to turn our thoughts another way, that the mind may not dwell upon it, or taste it with satisfaction; for this likewise is a part

part of self-denial, not less necessary than the former.

When one considers how narrow bounds are set to the life of man, and how much work is to be done, it may appear useless, at least, to put people on contriving methods for spending of time, of which we have got so short an allowance. But short as it is, even they who are willing to make the best use of it, find many blanks to be filled with things which might otherwise be let alone, and perhaps have no value at all, but what their serving this end gives them. Nor is the mystery hard to be unravelled; it is but remembering that most part of the work must be done (if not all) before we be admitted to a familiar intercourse with God; and in the mean time we can neither suffice ourselves, nor be a moment idle. Could we be always directly employed in pressing out the corruptions of nature, could we bear to have all our sores laid open at once, and to be constantly under the hand of the surgeon, it were very lucky; but whatever need we have to be whole, not one of a million could undergo so severe an operation. If therefore a gentler management were not  
3 C 2 used,

used, some respite now and then given, and opiates, to lessen to us the sense of our misery, weakness alone would make the cure impracticable; and while we are using these merely because they are necessary, we are doing what we ought to do, as much as at other times.

A management of this nature is not only pointed out, but even forced upon us; for the common affairs of life must be done. Thus a great part of that time which otherwise we would hardly know how to dispose of, is filled up by a plain direction of providence: our way, in a manner, is chalked; and by so unerring a hand, that we have but to follow the draught, without minding where it leads. It is true, it is not always strowed with roses; and the resting-places are often not very agreeable: but this mixture of uneasiness and satisfactions is admirably contrived, both to keep us from fooling away our time in gathering flowers that fade almost as soon as they appear, and from fainting under the fatigue of a long and painful journey. In this view the crosses and pleasures of life ought to be received: the first, as necessary to put us in mind we

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are but in the way, and to make us quicken our pace; the second, as necessary too, but to be enjoyed without attachment, and so as we can willingly leave them as soon as a new prospect opens. The succession, however, of crosses and pleasures, is not uninterrupted; we are not always treading on thorns, or tickled with delightful sensations: on the contrary, we are mostly employed about things which cannot be classed on the side of either; things daily to be done, yet such as give no more of disquiet or of pleasure, than just enough to make the doing them a work, or rather an amusement. Thus every one is eased more or less of the burden of himself, by the care he is obliged to take of his worldly affairs: the lawyer, the merchant, the mechanic, and he that follows the plough, have each a considerable relief in the exercise of their own trades; and none are so situated as to have no manner of business whatsoever, no sort of labour of body or mind.

But this labour or amusement (for any of these names it will bear) being unequal to persons of different circumstances, and even to the same persons at different times,

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we must often contrive for ourselves. Those which are the consequences of our state and condition in the world, being the appointment of providence, are always fit for us, if not spoilt by a wrong way of using them : but when we are left to our own choice, the danger is greater ; and commonly such as come first in the way are accepted. A little innocent pleasure, in order to recruit our spirits, is all we are in quest of ; and every method of procuring it, appears equally good. At this rate, however, we can never be sure of ourselves. Pleasures innocent to one, may not be so to another ; and while we fancy we are but passing a heavy hour, we may be nourishing curiosity, sensuality, or pride. We must therefore study our own tempers : in the diseases of the mind every one must be his own physician. Let us strictly examine ourselves ; and let every question be answered with the same care, to give a true representation of all the symptoms, whether good or bad, as in the case of a bodily indisposition : let every variation to the better or the worse be diligently observed ; and let us endeavour as far as possible to find out the cause. By  
this

this means, having by degrees come to a thorough knowledge of our own constitution, we shall be able with some sort of assurance to determine upon a fixed regimen for the whole course of our life, both as to the inward and the outward. Not that we are to tie ourselves to certain precise rules; for new incidents will be daily falling in, and different symptoms appearing: but we shall never be at a loss to know our part; we shall always have a remedy at hand, and a sure method of turning every thing to advantage: our affairs, our recreations, our friendships, our pleasures, our crosses, every thing, and every action, will be so managed as to bring us nearer to God, by helping us to acquire the dispositions we ought to have.

For this purpose the best general rule (and none but general ones can be given) is, to retire frequently into outward as well as inward solitude; separating ourselves from all created things, and keeping our hearts in a direct application to God, as long as the weakness of nature will permit. Nor should any one fancy that his state and circumstances can be such as to  
excuse

excuse him from the practice of this holy exercise: men of the most public characters, and engaged in the greatest hurry of secular affairs, will find leisure if they are but willing: let them only manage their time so as to lose no part of it in unnecessary amusements, and they will have enough to spare; more, I doubt, than at first they will be able to employ in this manner. It will however grow easier by degrees: and they who, not accustomed to it, can hardly pass a few minutes in prayer unless the mind be relieved with attending to the sound of words, will, by a faithful observation of this rule, quit their solitude with regret after a long and vigorous application to God, and a total abstraction from earthly things. But as it is impossible to acquire so easy and familiar an intercourse with God while we suffer ourselves to be dissipated, on returning to the common affairs of life we must endeavour to preserve a constant sense of the divine presence, by taking a little time, even in the midst of business or company, for recollection; that by often turning our thoughts directly upon God, our hearts  
may

may be always united to him \*. It must be done unobserved; but custom will make it easy, and at last it will grow natural. When we are alone, it may be continued longer at a time, and oftener repeated. In these moments we ought in the first place to offer up ourselves to God, and then whatever we are about; that as our intention is to do his will, he may be pleased to accept of our weak endeavours. This, or something to this purpose, may be done in the twinkling of an eye, for a thought is sufficient; and the rest of the time may be employed in awful adoration mixed with love.

\* Faites le plus d'oraison que vous pourrez; et au milieu de vos occupations, un petit regard amoureux lui dira tout sans rien dire.

## The CONCLUSION.

**F**ROM what has been said of the nature of intelligent beings, the end of their creation, and the fall of some, particularly of man, it will be an easy inference, that as the enjoyment of God is the foundation, or rather the all, of his happiness, and nothing can separate him from God but a disorder in those faculties by which he is capable to desire, love, and acquiesce in him, as soon as that disorder is removed, the spirit will be full of light, full of love, full of peace and joy : for it will then adhere to God, all its desires will be towards him, and they will all be satisfied. And whatever his outward circumstances may be, this spiritual peace, this inward or central happiness, will not be disturbed or lessened. By the bodily senses he may be affected with pleasure or pain ; and the faculties of the soul may receive agreeable impressions, or the contrary, according to the situation he is in, and the way in which the creatures act upon him ; but the



the spirit will remain untouched, its adherence to God will be firm, and its peace invariable; for being in possession of its object, it has all it can desire. This is the peace our Saviour left to his disciples; a peace which the world cannot give, or take away: and, to adhere in this manner to God, is to pray without ceasing.

To bring us to this state, wherein, propriety being absolutely destroyed, faith becomes the over-ruling principle of all our thoughts and actions\*; I say, to bring

\* — It is justly acknowledged, that all our operations and actions do necessarily partake of the inward over-ruling principle from which they flow and proceed. The inward over-ruling principles in man are, faith, or that divine spark placed by God in the centre of the soul, and propriety, or the desire of appropriating, which is the effect of sin: and as he habitually yields up himself to the one or the other of these, in different measures and degrees, his different states arise, and their respective principles of acting. All the various different states of man may be reduced to six; each of which have their different degrees, higher and lower: three of these states are good, and three bad.

The first is the divine pure state, wherein propriety being absolutely destroyed and annihilated, he acts habitually from the principle of faith, and consequently with a pure disinterested love to God; and God himself, who is pure love, rules and governs him according to his will without opposition. While he

bring us to this admirable state, (and brought to it we must be, if ever we see God),

“ continues in this state, all his actions are habitually pure and divine.

“ The second is the evangelical virtuous state, wherein he acts habitually from the principle of faith, but with some mixture of propriety; which being however gradually extinguished, his love to God grows daily more pure, and he advances in all true Christian and moral virtues, which are pleasing to God, and beneficial to men. While he continues in this state, all his actions are habitually Christian and virtuous.

“ The third is the legal servile state, wherein he acts indeed habitually from the principle of propriety, but so thoroughly mixed and penetrated with the fear of God, and of eternal punishments, and also with the hope of rewards, that he forsakes all his known sins, and performs his known duties, but in the spirit of fear and bondage; from which, however, he is gradually freed, and so enters into, and advances in true love to God, according as he yields up himself to the principle of faith, or that divine spark yet dwelling in his heart. While he abides in this state, all his actions are habitually mercenary and servile.

“ Of the three bad states, the first is the natural human state, wherein he acts habitually (not from the principle of faith, or any real regard to God, and things eternal, but merely) from the principle of propriety, and a regard to the things of time; yet so well ordered and adjusted, that it produces all the social and moral virtues which conduce to the temporal benefit of mankind. While he abides in this state, his actions cannot rise higher than their source, and so are natural and human,

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God), is the design of all the precepts of our holy religion, of all the outward dispensations

“ The second is the criminal vitious state, wherein  
 “ he acts habitually from the same principle of propriety, and a regard to the things of time, but so violent  
 “ and disordered, that it breaks through all the social  
 “ and moral virtues, and is habituated to the contrary  
 “ crimes and vices. While he continues in this state, all  
 “ his actions necessarily partake of the nature of the  
 “ principle whence they flow, and so are criminal and  
 “ vitious.

“ The third is the diabolical wicked state, wherein he  
 “ acts from a principle of pure wickedness, all love to  
 “ God and goodness being entirely extinguished. And  
 “ though in this state he can do many things good in  
 “ appearance, and transform himself into an angel of  
 “ light; yet all his actions partake of their source, and  
 “ so are diabolical and wicked.

“ It ought to be observed, that it is the ruling and  
 “ governing principle to which man has habitually subjected himself that constitutes the state, and also tinctures and leavens all his operations and actions while he continues in it. Even those actions that are natural, and necessary, and common to us with the brutes, such as eating, drinking, sleeping, &c. are in man all leavened with, and do necessarily partake of, the nature and quality of the inward principle by which he is habitually ruled and governed: and so they may be either divine or diabolical, or approach to the one or the other, conformably to the state he is in, and the over-ruling principle.

“ And as all men generally are in some one or other of these states, so all their actions do habitually go on in a train of the same kind and nature with their state:  
 “ nor

penfations of providence, and inward operations of grace. By the first our duty

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“ nor can any man in a bad state do an action truly good  
“ before God, but by getting the over-ruling principle  
“ of his heart and life changed to the better. And this  
“ change is not made in an instant: he may in an in-  
“ stant frame to himself beautiful ideas of good prin-  
“ ciples, ends, and motives; but the real and effectual  
“ change is not so soon made. It will require many re-  
“ iterated acts of his will, exerted from the very bottom  
“ of his heart and soul, to cast out the old bad principle,  
“ and to subject himself habitually to a good one.

“ Now the very point which distinguishes betwixt the  
“ lowest good state, which is the legal servile one, and  
“ the best of the bad ones, which is the natural human  
“ state, is this, that although in both man acts from the  
“ principle of propriety, and seems to be over-ruled by  
“ it; yet the propriety of the one has a real regard to  
“ God, and to the things that are eternal; whereas the  
“ propriety of the other, whatever may be professed in  
“ words, has really no regard but to the creatures, and  
“ to the things of time. Wherefore, although the ac-  
“ tions of the natural human state may appear very  
“ great and splendid, in all that tends to the temporal  
“ good of mankind, such as justice, honesty, friendship,  
“ generosity, compassion, benevolence, and all other so-  
“ cial and moral virtues, yet they are most justly rejected  
“ by God, as being done without any real regard to  
“ him. Whereas the actions of the legal servile state,  
“ however weak and mean in themselves, are accepted  
“ by him, as being done with a sincere regard to him,  
“ and a desire to please him, and to do his will. And  
“ though this regard to God, and fear of him, be in  
“ the beginning but weak, and in a low degree, and  
“ more

is made known, which by the last we are enabled to perform, if we are but willing; while things without us are so managed as to break our imaginary schemes of happiness, and to disconcert our projects, that by continual disappointments we may learn not to expect from the creatures what they are not capable to give. But this is not all. We must be made like unto God before we be united to him: the spirit must be purified from the corruption brought upon it by sin, and, as it were, melted into a perfect pliability to the will of God that the divine qualities of justice, goodness, and truth, may again be imprinted on it; that is, we must be emptied of ourselves, before we be filled with God. And because this central purification cannot begin until we have passed through one more outward, and e-

“ more servile than filial, yet it is the small seed, which  
“ being carefully entertained and duly cultivated in the  
“ soul, will become a great tree, and gradually advance  
“ it from the state of bondage, to that of the liberty of  
“ God’s children, and of pure love to him, which is the  
“ first of the good states, and truly divine.”

This short account of the different states of man, well deserves attention. It is taken from one of several letters (which probably will never be made public) wrote lately to \*\*\* by Mr A—, a person of great worth.



ven superficial in respect of the other, yet so hard to nature that few would submit to it, a kind of force must be used; not by constraint upon the will, for it will always continue free, but by things disagreeable and contrary to our inclinations, such also as it is impossible for us to prevent. For this purpose the creatures are made use of, and become instruments in the hand of God, for the purification of one another. In short, crosses are necessary, and they are well proportioned by infinite wisdom, according to the temper and circumstances of each particular person.

The belief of a providence, and that of the existence of a God, have never been separated even in the darkest times: for the gods of Epicurus are set up by him and his followers only as phantoms, to screen themselves from the danger or shame of being reputed atheists\*. Now what upon this earthly globe can be more worthy of the divine care than to prepare for happiness beings whose existence is to be eternal? Is it possible to believe a providence in any thing, and not in

\* Protagoras, for declaring himself doubtful, was put to death, and his books burnt in the streets of Athens.

this?

this ? Let us not think, however, that we can search into the counsels of God, or with our shallow understandings comprehend the ways of the Most High. “ He setteth up one, and pulleth down another : and who shall say unto him, “ What dost thou ? ” The life of one passeth in joy ; while grief, tearing grief ! is the lot of another : contempt, ignominy, and reproach is for some ; others are admired and applauded : one is calumniated ; another flattered : one persecuted ; another cajolled : if we look into the condition of some, they seem to be the darlings of Fortune ; pleasure flows upon them, and every thing prospers in their hands : the cross is the portion of others ; they must live and die upon it. These things appear unequal : but there comes a time when the order of providence, its justice and uniformity, will all be laid open ; and probably the darkest scenes will be found the most glorious. Till then let us live by faith, and rest contented in the will of God. We know that he has not set us adrift in the wide ocean of life to be tossed by the winds and

waves at random, until we are dashed to pieces against some rock, or by a whirlpool sink into the bottomless gulf of a miserable eternity. This, indeed, is the wretched system of those who, to support imaginary decrees of their own framing, boldly ascribe to God a conduct which the worst of men would be ashamed to own. With them, a few favourites only must be preserved, rescued from the general shipwreck by the omnipotent hand of God, and, as it were by enchantment, placed in the haven of eternal life they know not how : while the rest are denied the necessary means of safety, or have their hands bound up so as they cannot use them. But as we know that God governs the world, we know also that he does not sport himself in the misery of his creatures. How agreeable is it to find ourselves in the hand of an almighty being, who loves us tenderly, and knows what is fit for us, and what we are able to bear !

Let us on our part endeavour to make the right use of life ; and, in doing so, let us go through it without scrupulosity, without

without fear. God is not standing over us like an Egyptian taskmaster : he is our Father, (our Saviour has taught us to call him so), and he is pleased with seeing us do our little work with a perfect dependence, and a child-like simplicity ; sensible of our own weakness, but not discouraged, being sure of assistance from him ; loving him this moment as much as we can, and desiring to love him more the next. With these dispositions we shall live with innocence, and need not be afraid to die : God is God in the next world as well as in this ; there, as here, we shall be disposed of according to his will ; and if by a wish it could be otherwise, we would not make it.

But though a good life is the best preparation for death, it is not the only. Our conduct in health may have been such that in sickness we cannot reflect upon it without horror ; yet we are not to give up all as lost, or fill our minds with terrible apprehensions of the judgements of God : our purification may not be completed, perhaps not begun ; but his mercy is infinite, and if we are capable of

being purified, he will find a way. Repentance indeed is necessary, absolutely necessary; but the best repentance is that which comes from another motive than the fear of punishment: and though the hardness of our hearts may oblige us to make it the first, it is of the utmost importance to know that it ought not to be the last. Whatever be the best preparation for death, love and submission are the best dispositions to die in: and as our time then may be very short, we must endeavour to pass all at once to that which is most perfect. Whether we be languishing on a bed, or racked with pain; whether we have spiritual consolation, or the contrary; God is the master, let him do his will, it is our part to love and to submit: and though we be not sensible that we love, let us still submit, and love as much as we can. In short, whatever be our state of body and mind, let us put no bounds to our resignation, and leave the rest to God.

I have, you see, filled a good deal of paper, more indeed than I at first thought of:



of: a greater skill in writing might have brought it to a narrower compass; but as it is, I hope the time you shall bestow upon reading it will not be lost. My design was to make it useful, and I have endeavoured it all I could; for it may be the only way I can give you advice.

To all my Children  
—after my death.

Wrote in 1729-1730. Some Notes added, and this copy \* made, in 1735.

[ \* The identical copy which was given to the printer.]

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